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LETTERS OF CHARLES LAMB.





THE
LETTERS
OF
CHARLES LAMB,
WITH
A Sketch of his Life.

BY
THOMAS NOON TALFOURD,
ONE OF HIS EXECUTORS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LETTERS, &c.
OF
CHARLES LAMB.

CHAPTER X.

[1815 to 1817.]

LETTERS TO WORDSWORTH, SOUTHEY, AND
MANNING.

IT was at the beginning of the year 1815 that I had first the happiness of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Lamb. With his scattered essays and poems I had become familiar a few weeks before, through the instrumentality of Mr. Barron Field, now Chief Justice of Gibraltar, who had been brought into close intimacy with Lamb by the association of his own family with Christ's Hospital, of which his father was the surgeon, and by his own participation in the "Reflector." Living

then in chambers in Inner Temple-lane, and attending those of Mr. Chitty, the special pleader, which were on the next staircase to Mr. Lamb's, I had been possessed some time by a desire to become acquainted with the writings of my gifted neighbour, which my friend was able only partially to gratify. "John Woodvil," and the number of the "Reflector" enriched with Lamb's article, he indeed lent me, but he had no copy of "Rosamund Gray," which I was most anxious to read, and which, after earnest search through all the bookstalls within the scope of my walks, I found, exhibiting proper marks of due appreciation, in the store of a little circulating library near Holborn. There was something in this little romance so entirely new, yet breathing the air of old acquaintance; a sense of beauty so delicate and so intense; and a morality so benignant and so profound, that, as I read it, my curiosity to see its author rose almost to the height of pain. The commencement of the new year brought me that gratification; I was invited to meet Lamb at dinner, at the house of Mr. William Evans, a gentleman holding an office in the India-House, who then lived in Weymouth-street, and who was a proprietor of the "Pamphleteer," to which I had

contributed some idle scribblings. My duties at the office did not allow me to avail myself of this invitation to dinner, but I went up at ten o'clock, through a deep snow, palpably congealing into ice, and was amply repaid when I reached the hospitable abode of my friend. There was Lamb, preparing to depart, but he stayed half an hour in kindness to me, and then accompanied me to our common home—the Temple.

Methinks I see him before me now, as he appeared then, and as he continued, with scarcely any perceptible alteration to me, during the twenty years of intimacy which followed, and were closed by his death. A light frame, so fragile that it seemed as if a breath would overthrow it, clad in clerk-like black, was surmounted by a head of form and expression the most noble and sweet. His black hair curled crisply about an expanded forehead; his eyes, softly brown, twinkled with varying expression, though the prevalent feeling was sad; and the nose slightly curved, and delicately carved at the nostril, with the lower outline of the face regularly oval, completed a head which was finely placed on the shoulders, and gave importance, and even dignity, to a diminutive and shadowy stem. Who shall describe his countenance

—catch its quivering sweetness—and fix it for ever in words? There are none, alas! to answer the vain desire of friendship. Deep thought, striving with humour; the lines of suffering wreathed into cordial mirth; and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as lose. His personal appearance and manner are not unfitly characterised by what he himself says in one of his letters to Manning of Braham—“a compound of the Jew, the gentleman, and the angel.” He took my arm, and we walked to the Temple, Lamb stammering out fine remarks as we walked; and when we reached his staircase, he detained me with an urgency which would not be denied, and we mounted to the top story, where an old petted servant, called Becky, was ready to receive us. We were soon seated beside a cheerful fire; hot water and its better adjuncts were before us; and Lamb insisted on my sitting with him while he smoked “one pipe”—for, alas! for poor human nature—he had resumed his acquaintance with his “fair traitress.” How often the pipe and the glasses were replenished, I will not undertake to disclose; but I can never forget the conversation; though the first, it was more solemn, and in higher mood, than any I ever after

had with Lamb through the whole of our friendship. How it took such a turn between two strangers, one of them a lad of not quite twenty, I cannot tell; but so it happened. We discoursed then of life and death, and our anticipation of a world beyond the grave. Lamb spoke of these awful themes with the simplest piety, but expressed his own fond cleavings to life—to all well-known accustomed things—and a shivering (not shuddering) sense of that which is to come, which he so finely indicated in his “New Year’s Eve,” years afterwards. It was two o’clock before we parted, when Lamb gave me a hearty invitation to renew my visit at pleasure; but two or three months elapsed before I saw him again. In the mean time, a number of the “Pamphleteer” contained an “Essay on the Chief Living Poets,” among whom on the title appeared the name of Lamb, and some page or two were expressly devoted to his praises. It was a poor tissue of tawdry eulogies—a shallow outpouring of young enthusiasm in fine words, which it mistakes for thoughts—yet it gave Lamb, who had hitherto received scarcely civil notice from reviewers, great pleasure to find that any one recognised him as having a place among poets. The next time I saw him, he came

almost breathless into the office, and proposed to give me what I should have chosen as the greatest of all possible honours and delights—an introduction to Wordsworth, who I learned, with a palpitating heart, was actually at the next door. I hurried out with my kind conductor, and a minute after was presented by Lamb to the person whom in all the world I venerated most, with this preface:—"Wordsworth, give me leave to introduce to you my only admirer."

The following letter was addressed to Wordsworth, after his return to Westmoreland from this visit:—

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"9th Aug. 1815.

"Dear Wordsworth,—Mary and I felt quite queer after your taking leave (you W. W.) of us in St. Giles's. We wished we had seen more of you, but felt we had scarce been sufficiently acknowledging for the share we had enjoyed of your company. We felt as if we had been not enough *expressive* of our pleasure. But our manners *both* are a little too much on this side of too-much-cordiality. We want presence of mind and presence

of heart. What we feel comes too late, like an after-thought impromptu. But perhaps you observed nothing of that which we have been painfully conscious of, and are every day in our intercourse with those we stand affected to through all the degrees of love. Robinson is on the circuit—our panegyrist I thought had forgotten one of the objects of his youthful admiration, but I was agreeably removed from that scruple by the laundress knocking at my door this morning, almost before I was up, with a present of fruit from my young friend, &c. There is something inexpressibly pleasant to me in these *presents*, be it fruit, or fowl, or brawn, or *what not*. Books are a legitimate cause of acceptance. If presents be not the soul of friendship, undoubtedly they are the most spiritual part of the body of that intercourse. There is too much narrowness of thinking in this point. The punctilio of acceptance, methinks, is too confined and strait-laced. I could be content to receive money, or clothes, or a joint of meat from a friend. Why should he not send me a dinner as well as a dessert? I would taste him in the beasts of the field, and through all creation. Therefore did the basket of fruit of the juvenile Talfourd not displease me; not that I have

any thoughts of bartering or reciprocating these things. To send him any thing in return would be to reflect suspicion of mercenariness upon what I know he meant a free-will offering. Let him overcome me in bounty. In this strife a generous nature loves to be overcome. You wish me some of your leisure. I have a glimmering aspect, a chink-light of liberty before me, which, I pray God, prove not fallacious. My remonstrances have stirred up others to remonstrate, and, altogether, there is a plan for separating certain parts of business from our department; which, if it take place, will produce me more time, *i. e.* my evenings free. It may be a means of placing me in a more conspicuous situation, which will knock at my nerves another way, but I wait the issue in submission. If I can but begin my own day at four o'clock in the afternoon, I shall think myself to have Eden days of peace and liberty to what I have had. As you say, how a man can fill three volumes up with an essay on the drama, is wonderful; I am sure a very few sheets would hold all I had to say on the subject.

* * * * *

Did you ever read ‘Charron on Wisdom?’ or ‘Patrick’s Pilgrim?’ If neither, you have two great

pleasures to come. I mean some day to attack Caryl on Job, six folios. What any man can write, surely I may read. If I do but get rid of auditing warehousekeepers' accounts, and get no worse-harassing task in the place of it, what a lord of liberty I shall be! I shall dance, and skip, and make mouths at the invisible event, and pick the thorns out of my pillow, and throw 'em at rich men's night-caps, and talk blank verse, hoity, toity, and sing—'A clerk I was in London gay,' 'Ban, ban, Ca-Caliban,' like the emancipated monster, and go where I like, up this street or down that alley. Adieu, and pray that it may be my luck.

“Good bye to you all.

“C. LAMB.”

The following letter was inclosed in the same parcel with the last.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

“1815.

“Dear Southey,—Robinson is not on the circuit, as I erroneously stated in a letter to W. W., which travels with this, but is gone to Brussels, Ostend, Ghent, &c. But his friends, the Colliers, whom I consulted respecting your friend's fate, remember to have heard him say, that Father

Pardo had effected his escape (the cunning greasy rogue), and to the best of their belief is at present in Paris. To my thinking, it is a small matter whether there be one fat friar more or less in the world. I have rather a taste for clerical executions, imbibed from early recollections of the fate of the excellent Dodd. I hear Bonaparte has sued his habeas corpus, and the twelve judges are now sitting upon it at the Rolls.

“Your *boute-feu* (bonfire) must be excellent of its kind. Poet Settle presided at the last great thing of the kind in London, when the pope was burnt in form. Do you provide any verses on this occasion? Your fear for Hartley’s intellectuals is just and rational. Could not the chancellor be petitioned to remove him? His lordship took Mr. Betty from under the paternal wing. I think at least he should go through a course of matter-of-fact with some sober man after the mysteries. Could not he spend a week at Poole’s before he goes back to Oxford? Tobin is dead. But there is a man in my office, a Mr. H., who proses it away from morning to night, and never gets beyond corporal and material verities. He’d get these crack-brain metaphysics out of the young gentleman’s head as soon as any one I know.

When I can't sleep o' nights, I imagine a dialogue with Mr. H., upon any given subject, and go prosing on in fancy with him, till I either laugh or fall asleep. I have literally found it answer. I am going to stand godfather; I don't like the business; I cannot muster up decorum for these occasions; I shall certainly disgrace the font. I was at Hazlitt's marriage, and had like to have been turned out several times during the ceremony. Any thing awful makes me laugh. I misbehaved once at a funeral. Yet I can read about these ceremonies with pious and proper feelings. The realities of life only seem the mockeries. I fear I must get cured along with Hartley, if not too inveterate. Don't you think Louis the Desirable is in a sort of quandary?

"After all, Bonaparte is a fine fellow, as my barber says, and I should not mind standing bare-headed at his table to do him service in his fall. They should have given him Hampton Court or Kensington, with a tether extending forty miles round London. Qu. Would not the people have ejected the Brunswicks some day in his favour? Well, we shall see.

" C. LAMB."

The following was addressed to Southey in acknowledgment of his "Roderick," the most sustained and noble of his poems.

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Dear Southey,—I have received from Longman a copy of 'Roderick,' with the author's compliments, for which I much thank you. I don't know where I shall put all the noble presents I have lately received in that way; the 'Excursion,' Wordsworth's two last vols., and now 'Roderick,' have come pouring in upon me like some irruption from Helicon. The story of the brave Maccabee was already, you may be sure, familiar to me in all its parts. I have, since the receipt of your present, read it quite through again, and with no diminished pleasure. I don't know whether I ought to say that it has given me more pleasure than any of your long poems. 'Kehama' is doubtless more powerful, but I don't feel that firm footing in it that I do in 'Roderick;' my imagination goes sinking and floundering in the vast spaces of unopened-before systems and faiths; I am put out of the pale of my old sympathies; my moral sense is almost outraged; I can't believe, or, with horror am made to believe, such desperate chances against

omnipotences, such disturbances of faith to the centre; the more potent the more painful the spell. Jove, and his brotherhood of gods, tottering with the giant assailings, I can bear, for the soul's hopes are not struck at in such contests; but your Oriental almighties are too much types of the intangible prototype to be meddled with without shuddering. One never connects what are called the attributes with Jupiter. I mention only what diminishes my delight at the wonder-workings of 'Kehama,' not what impeaches its power, which I confess with trembling; but 'Roderick' is a comfortable poem. It reminds me of the delight I took in the first reading of the 'Joan of Arc.' It is maturer and better than *that*, though not better to me now than that was then. It suits me better than Madoc. I am at home in Spain and Christendom. I have a timid imagination, I am afraid. I do not willingly admit of strange beliefs, or out-of-the-way creeds or places. I never read books of travels, at least not farther than Paris, or Rome. I can just endure Moors, because of their connexion as foes with Christians; but Abyssinians, Ethiops, Esquimaux, Dervises, and all that tribe, I hate. I believe I fear them in some manner. A Mahometan turban on the stage, though enve-

loping some well known face (Mr. Cook or Mr. Maddox, whom I see another day good Christian and English waiters, inn-keepers, &c.), does not give me pleasure unalloyed. I am a Christian, Englishman, Londoner, *Templar*. God help me, when I come to put off these snug relations, and to get abroad into the world to come! I shall be like *the crow on the sand*, as Wordsworth has it; but I won't think on it; no need I hope yet.

“The parts I have been most pleased with, both on first and second readings, perhaps are Florinda's palliation of Roderick's crime, confessed to him in his disguise—the retreat of the Palayos family first discovered,—his being made king—‘For acclamation one form must serve, *more solemn for the breach of old observances.*’ Roderick's vow is extremely fine, and his blessing on the vow of Alphonso:

‘Towards the troop he spread his arms,
As if the expanded soul diffused itself,
And carried to all spirits *with the act*
Its affluent inspiration.’

“It struck me forcibly that the feeling of these last lines might have been suggested to you by the Cartoon of Paul at Athens. Certain it is that

a better motto or guide to that famous attitude can no where be found. I shall adopt it as explanatory of that violent, but dignified motion. I must read again Landor's 'Julian.' I have not read it some time. I think he must have failed in Roderick, for I remember nothing of him, nor of any distinct character as a character—only fine sounding passages. I remember thinking also he had chosen a point of time after the event, as it were, for Roderick survives to no use; but my memory is weak, and I will not wrong a fine poem by trusting to it. The notes to your poem I have not read again; but it will be a take-downable book on my shelf, and they will serve sometimes at breakfast, or times too light for the text to be duly appreciated. Though some of 'em, one of the serpent penance, is serious enough, now I think on't. Of Coleridge I hear nothing, nor of the Morgans. I hope to have him, like a re-appearing star, standing up before me some time when least expected in London, as has been the case whylear.

“I am *doing* nothing (as the phrase is) but reading presents, and walk away what of the day-hours I can get from hard occupation. Pray accept once more my hearty thanks, and expression

of pleasure for your remembrance of me. My sister desires her kind respects to Mrs. S. and to all at Keswick.

“ Yours truly,

“ C. LAMB.

“ London, 6th May, 1815.

“ The next present I look for is the ‘ White Doe.’ Have you seen Mat. Betham’s ‘ Lay of Marie.’ I think it very delicately pretty as to sentiment, &c.”

The following is an extract of a letter, addressed shortly afterwards,

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

“ Since I saw you I have had a treat in the reading way, which comes not every day; the Latin poems of Vincent Bourne, which were quite new to me. What a heart that man had, all laid out upon town-scenes, a proper counterpart to *some people’s* extravagances. Why I mention him is, that your ‘ Power of Music ’ reminded me of his poem of the ballad-singer in the Seven Dials. Do you remember his epigram on the old woman who taught Newton the A, B, C, which, after all, he says, he hesitates not to call Newton’s *Principia* ?

“I was lately fatiguing myself with going over a volume of fine words by ——, excellent words; and if the heart could live by words alone, it could desire no better regale; but what an aching vacuum of matter! I don’t stick at the madness of it, for that is only a consequence of shutting his eyes, and thinking he is in the age of the old Elizabeth poets. From thence I turned to V. Bourne; what a sweet, unpretending, pretty-manner’d, *matter-full* creature! sucking from every flower, making a flower of every thing. His diction all Latin, and his thoughts all English. Bless him! Latin wasn’t good enough for him. Why wasn’t he content with the language which Gay and Prior wrote in?”

The associations of Christmas increased the fervour of Lamb’s wishes for Manning’s return, which he now really hoped for. On Christmas-day he addressed a letter to him at Canton, and the next day another to meet him half-way home, at St. Helena, &c. There seems the distance of half a globe between these letters. The first, in which Lamb pictures their dearest common friends as in a melancholy future, and makes it present—lying-like dismal truths—yet with a relieving con-

sciousness of a power to dispel the sad enchantments he has woven, has perhaps more of what was peculiar in Lamb's cast of thought, than any thing of the same length which he has left us.

TO MR. MANNING.

“Dear old friend and absentee,—This is Christmas-day 1815 with us; what it may be with you I don't know, the 12th of June next year perhaps; and if it should be the consecrated season with you, I don't see how you can keep it. You have no turkeys; you would not desecrate the festival by offering up a withered Chinese bantam, instead of the savoury grand Norfolcian holocaust, that smokes all around my nostrils at this moment, from a thousand fire-sides. Then what puddings have you? Where will you get holly to stick in your churches, or churches to stick your dried tea-leaves (that must be the substitute) in? What memorials you can have of the holy time, I see not. A chopped missionary or two may keep up the thin idea of Lent and the wilderness; but what standing evidence have you of the Nativity?—'tis our rosy-cheeked, homestalled divines, whose faces shine to the tune of Christmas; faces fragrant with the mince-pies of half a century, that alone can authen-

ticate the cheerful mystery—I feel, I feel myself refreshed with the thought—my zeal is great against the unedified heathen. Down with the Pagodas—down with the idols—Ching-chong-fo—and his foolish priesthood! Come out of Babylon, O my friend! for her time is come, and the child that is native, and the Proselyte of her gates, shall kindle and smoke together! And in sober sense what makes you so long from among us, Manning? You must not expect to see the same England again which you left.

“Empires have been overturned, crowns trodden into dust, the face of the western world quite changed: your friends have all got old—those you left blooming—myself (who am one of the few that remember you) those golden hairs which you recollect my taking a pride in, turned to silvery and grey. Mary has been dead and buried many years—she desired to be buried in the silk gown you sent her. Rickman, that you remember active and strong, now walks out supported by a servant-maid and a stick. Martin Burney is a very old man. The other day an aged woman knocked at my door, and pretended to my acquaintance: it was long before I had the most distant cognition of her; but at last together we made her out to

be Louisa, the daughter of Mrs. Topham, formerly Mrs. Morton, who had been Mrs. Reynolds, formerly Mrs. Kenney, whose first husband was Holcroft the dramatic writer of the last century. St. Paul's church is a heap of ruins; the Monument isn't half so high as you knew it, divers parts being successively taken down which the ravages of time had rendered dangerous; the horse at Charing Cross is gone, no one knows whither,—and all this has taken place while you have been settling whether Ho-hing-tong should be spelt with a——, or a —— . For aught I see you had almost as well remain where you are, and not come like a Strulbug into a world where few were born when you went away. Scarce here and there one will be able to make out your face; all your opinions will be out of date, your jokes obsolete, your puns rejected with fastidiousness as wit of the last age. Your way of mathematics has already given way to a new method, which after all is I believe the old doctrine of Maclaurin, new vamped up with what he borrowed of the negative quantity of fluxions from Euler.

“ Poor Godwin! I was passing his tomb the other day in Cripplegate church-yard. There are some verses upon it written by Miss ——,

which if I thought good enough I would send you. He was one of those who would have hailed your return, not with boisterous shouts and clamours, but with the complacent gratulations of a philosopher anxious to promote knowledge as leading to happiness—but his systems and his theories are ten feet deep in Cripplegate mould. Coleridge is just dead, having lived just long enough to close the eyes of Wordsworth, who paid the debt to nature but a week or two before—poor Col., but two days before he died, he wrote to a bookseller proposing an epic poem on the ‘Wanderings of Cain,’ in twenty-four books. It is said he has left behind him more than forty thousand treatises in criticism, metaphysics, and divinity, but few of them in a state of completion. They are now destined, perhaps, to wrap up spices. You see what mutations the busy hand of Time has produced, while you have consumed in foolish voluntary exile that time which might have gladdened your friends—benefitted your country; but reproaches are useless. Gather up the wretched reliques, my friend, as fast as you can, and come to your old home. I will rub my eyes and try to recognise you. We will shake withered hands together, and talk of old things—of St. Mary’s church and

the barber's opposite, where the young students in mathematics used to assemble. Poor Crips, that kept it afterwards, set up a fruiterer's shop in Trumpington-street, and for aught I know resides there still, for I saw the name up in the last journey I took there with my sister just before she died. I suppose you heard that I had left the India House, and gone into the Fishmongers' Almshouses over the bridge. I have a little cabin there, small and homely, but you shall be welcome to it. You like oysters, and to open them yourself; I'll get you some if you come in oyster time. Marshall, Godwin's old friend, is still alive, and talks of the faces you used to make.

“Come as soon as you can.

“C. LAMB.”

Here is the next day's reverse of the picture.

TO MR. MANNING.

“Dec. 26, 1815.

“Dear Manning,—Following your brother's example, I have just ventured one letter to Canton, and am now hazarding another (not exactly a duplicate) to St. Helena. The first was full of unprobable romantic fictions, fitting the remoteness of

the mission it goes upon; in the present I mean to confine myself nearer to truth as you come nearer home. A correspondence with the uttermost parts of the earth necessarily involves in it some heat of fancy, it sets the brain a going, but I can think on the half-way house tranquilly. Your friends then are not all dead or grown forgetful of you through old age, as that lying letter asserted, anticipating rather what must happen if you kept tarrying on for ever on the skirts of creation, as there seemed a danger of your doing—but they are all tolerably well and in full and perfect comprehension of what is meant by Manning's coming home again. Mrs. — never lets her tongue run riot more than in remembrances of you. Fanny expends herself in phrases that can only be justified by her romantic nature. Mary reserves a portion of your silk, not to be buried in (as the false nuncio asserts) but to make up spick and span into a bran-new gown to wear when you come. I am the same as when you knew me, almost to a surfeiting identity. This very night I am going to *leave off tobacco*! Surely in another world this unconquerable purpose shall be realized. The soul hath not her generous aspirings implanted in her in vain. One that you

knew, and I think the only one of those friends we knew much of in common, has died in earnest. Poor Priscilla ! Her brother Robert is also dead, and several of the grown up brothers and sisters, in the compass of a very few years. Death has not otherwise meddled much in families that I know. Not but he has his horrid eye upon us, and is whetting his infernal feathered dart every instant, as you see him truly pictured in that impressive moral picture, ‘The good man at the hour of death.’ I have in trust to put in the post four letters from Diss, and one from Lynn, to St. Helena, which I hope will accompany this safe, and one from Lynn, and the one before spoken of from me, to Canton. But we all hope that these letters may be waste paper. I don’t know why I have forborne writing so long. But it is such a forlorn hope to send a scrap of paper straggling over wide oceans. And yet I know when you come home, I shall have you sitting before me at our fire-side just as if you had never been away. In such an instant does the return of a person dissipate all the weight of imaginary perplexity from distance of time and space ? I’ll promise you good oysters. Cory is dead that kept the shop opposite St. Dunstan’s. but the tougher materials

of the shop survive the perishing frame of its keeper. Oysters continue to flourish there under as good auspices. Poor Cory! But if you will absent yourself twenty years together, you must not expect numerically the same population to congratulate your return which wetted the sea beach with their tears when you went away. Have you recovered the breathless stone-staring astonishment into which you must have been thrown upon learning at landing that an Emperor of France was living in St. Helena? What an event in the solitude of the seas, like finding a fish's bone at the top of Plinlimmon; but these things are nothing in our western world. Novelties cease to affect. Come and try what your presence can.

“ God bless you.—Your old friend,

“ C. LAMB.”

The years which Lamb passed in his chambers in Inner Temple-lane were, perhaps, the happiest of his life. His salary was considerably augmented, his fame as an author was rapidly extending; he resided near the spot which he best loved; and was surrounded by a motley group of attached friends, some of them men of rarest parts, and all strongly attached to him and to his sister. Here the glory of his

Wednesday nights shone forth in its greatest lustre. If you did not meet there the favourites of fortune ; authors whose works bore the highest price in Paternoster-row, and who glittered in the circles of fashion ; you might find those who had thought most deeply ; felt most keenly ; and were destined to produce the most lasting influences on the literature and manners of the age. There Hazlitt, sometimes kindling into fierce passion at any mention of the great reverses of his idol Napoleon, at other times bashfully enunciated the finest criticism on art ; or dwelt with genial iteration on a passage in Chaucer ; or, fresh from the theatre, expatiated on some new instance of energy in Kean, or reluctantly conceded a greatness to Kemble ; or detected some popular fallacy with the fairest and the subtlest reasoning. There Godwin, as he played his quiet rubber, or benignantly joined in the gossip of the day, sat an object of curiosity and wonder to the stranger, who had been at one time shocked or charmed with his high speculation, and at another awe-struck by the force and graphic power of his novels. There Coleridge sometimes, though rarely, took his seat ;—and then the genial hubbub of voices was still ; critics, philosophers, and poets, were contented to listen ; and toil-worn lawyers, clerks

from the India House, and members of the Stock Exchange, grew romantic while he spoke. Lamb used to say that he was inferior then to what he had been in his youth; but I can scarcely believe it; at least there is nothing in his early writing which gives any idea of the richness of his mind so lavishly poured out at this time in his happiest moods. Although he looked much older than he was, his hair being silvered all over, and his person tending to corpulency, there was about him no trace of bodily sickness or mental decay, but rather an air of voluptuous repose. His benignity of manner placed his auditors entirely at their ease; and inclined them to listen delighted to the sweet, low tone in which he began to discourse on some high theme. Whether he had won for his greedy listener only some raw lad, or charmed a circle of beauty, rank, and wit, who hung breathless on his words, he talked with equal eloquence; for his subject, not his audience, inspired him. At first his tones were conversational; he seemed to dally with the shallows of the subject and with fantastic images which bordered it; but gradually the thought grew deeper, and the voice deepened with the thought; the stream gathering strength, seemed to bear along with it all

things which opposed its progress, and blended them with its current; and stretching away among regions tinted with ethereal colours, was lost at airy distance in the horizon of fancy. His hearers were unable to grasp his theories, which were indeed too vast to be exhibited in the longest conversation; but they perceived noble images, generous suggestions, affecting pictures of virtue, which enriched their minds and nurtured their best affections. Coleridge was sometimes induced to recite portions of "Christabel," then enshrined in manuscript from eyes profane, and gave a bewitching effect to its wizard lines. But more peculiar in its beauty than this was his recitation of *Kubla Khan*. As he repeated the passage—

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw :
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mont Abora !

his voice seemed to mount, and melt into air, as the images grew more visionary, and the suggested associations more remote. He usually met opposition by conceding the point to the objector, and then went on with his high argument as if it had never been raised: thus satisfying his antagonist, himself, and all who heard him; none of

whom desired to hear his discourse frittered into points, or displaced by the near encounter even of the most brilliant wits. The first time I met him, which was on one of those Wednesday evenings, we quitted the party together between one and two in the morning; Coleridge took my arm, and led me nothing loath, at a very gentle pace, to his lodgings, at the Gloucester Coffee-house, pouring into my ear the whole way an argument by which he sought to reconcile the doctrines of Necessity and Free-will, winding on through a golden maze of exquisite illustration; but finding no end, except with the termination of that (to me) enchanted walk. He was only then on the threshold of the Temple of Truth, into which his genius darted its quivering and uncertain rays, but which he promised shortly to light up with unbroken lustre. "I understood a beauty in the words, but not the words:"

" And when the stream of sound,
Which overflow'd the soul, had passed away,
A consciousness surviv'd that it had left,
Deposited upon the silent shore
Of memory, images and gentle thoughts,
Which cannot die, and will not be destroyed."

Men of "great mark and likelihood"—attended those delightful suppers, where the utmost free-

dom prevailed—including politicians of every grade, from Godwin up to the editor of the “New Times.”

Hazlitt has alluded *con amore* to these meetings in his Essay “On the Conversation of Authors,” and has reported one of the most remarkable discussions which graced them in his Essay “On Persons one would wish to have seen,” published by his son, in the two volumes of his remains, which with so affectionate a care he has given to the world. In this was a fine touch of Lamb’s pious feeling, breaking through his fancies and his humours, which Hazlitt has recorded, but which cannot be duly appreciated, except by those who can recall to memory the suffused eye and quivering lip with which he stammered out a reference to the name which he would not utter. “There is only one other person I can ever think of after this,” said he. “If Shakspeare was to come into the room, we should all rise to meet him; but if *That Person* were to come into it, we should all fall down and kiss the hem of his garment.”

Among the frequent guests in Inner-Temple Lane was Mr. Ayrton, the director of the music at the Italian Opera. To him Lamb addressed the following rhymed epistle on 17th May 1817.

TO WILLIAM AYRTON, ESQ

My dear friend,
 Before I end,
 Have you any
 More orders for Don Giovanni,
 To give
 Him that doth live
 Your faithful Zany?

Without raillery,
 I mean Gallery
 Ones :
 For I am a person that shuns
 All ostentation,
 And being at the top of the fashion ;
 And seldom go to operas,
 But *in formâ pauperis* !

I go to the play
 In a very economical sort of a way,
 Rather to see
 Than be seen ;
 Though I'm no ill sight
 Neither,
 By candle-light
 And in some kinds of weather.
 You might pit me
 For height
 Against Kean ;
 But in a grand tragic scene
 I'm nothing :
 It would create a kind of loathing
 To see me act Hamlet ;
 There'd be many a damn let
 Fly
 At my presumption,
 If I should try,
 Being a fellow of no gumption.

By the way, tell me candidly how you relish
This, which they call
The lapidary style ?
Opinions vary.
The late Mr. Mellish
Could never abide it ;
He thought it vile,
And coxcombical.
My friend the poet laureat,
Who is a great lawyer at
Anything comical,
Was the first who tried it ;
But Mellish could never abide it ;
But it signifies very little what Mellish said,
Because he is dead.

For who can confute
A body that's mute ?
Or who would fight
With a senseless sprite ?
Or think of troubling
An impenetrable old goblin,
That's dead and gone,
And stiff as stone,
To convince him with arguments pro and con ?
As if some live logician,
Bred up at Merton,
Or Mr. Hazlitt, the metaphysician,—
Hey, Mr. Ayrton !
With all your rare tone.*

* From this it may at first appear, that the author meant to ascribe vocal talents to his friend, the Director of the Italian Opera ; but it is merely a “ line for rhyme.” For, though the public were indebted to Mr. A. for many fine foreign singers, we believe that he never claimed to be himself a singer.

For tell me how should an apparition
 List to your call,
 Though you talk'd for ever,
 Ever so clever :
 When his ear itself,
 By which he must hear, or not hear at all,
 Is laid on the shelf?
 Or put the case
 (For more grace),
 It were a female spectre—
 How could you expect her
 To take much gust
 In long speeches,
 With her tongue as dry as dust,
 In a sandy place,
 Where no peaches,
 Nor lemons, nor limes, nor oranges hang,
 To drop on the drought of an arid harangue,
 Or quench,
 With their sweet drench,
 The fiery pangs which the worms inflict,
 With their endless nibblings,
 Like quibblings,
 Which the corpse may dislike, but can ne'er contradict—
 Hey, Mr. Ayrton ?
 With all your rare tone.

I am,

C. LAMB.

One of Lamb's most intimate friends and warmest admirers, Barron Field, disappeared from the circle on being appointed to a judicial situation in New South Wales. In the following letter to him, Lamb renewed the feeling with which he had addressed Manning at the distance of a hemisphere.

TO MR. FIELD.

“ My dear Barron,—The bearer of this letter so far across the seas is Mr. Lawrey, who comes out to you as a missionary, and whom I have been strongly importuned to recommend to you as a most worthy creature by Mr. Fenwick, a very old, honest friend of mine ; of whom, if my memory does not deceive me, you have had some knowledge heretofore as editor of ‘ The Statesman,’ a man of talent, and patriotic. If you can show him any facilities in his arduous undertaking, you will oblige us much. Well, and how does the land of thieves use you ? and how do you pass your time, in your extra-judicial intervals ? Going about the streets with a lantern, like Diogenes, looking for an honest man ? You may look long enough, I fancy. Do give me some notion of the manners of the inhabitants where you are. They don’t thieve all day long, do they ? No human property could stand such continuous battery. And what do they do when they an’t stealing ?

“ Have you got a theatre ? What pieces are performed ? Shakspeare’s, I suppose ; not so much for the poetry, as for his having once been in danger of leaving his country on account of certain ‘ small deer.’

“ Have you poets among you? Cursed plagiarists, I fancy, if you have any. I would not trust an idea, or a pocket-handkerchief of mine, among ’em. You are almost competent to answer Lord Bacon’s problem, whether a nation of atheists can subsist together. You are practically in one :

‘ So thievish ’tis, that the Eighth Commandment itself
Scarce seemeth there to be.’

Our old honest world goes on with little perceptible variation. Of course you have heard of poor ——’s death, and that G. D. is one of Lord Stanhope’s residuaries. I am afraid he has not touched much of the residue yet. B—— is going to Demerara, or Essequibo, I am not quite certain which. A—— is turned actor. He came out in genteel comedy at Cheltenham this season, and has hopes of a London engagement.

“ For my own history, I am just in the same spot, doing the same thing, (videlicet, little or nothing,) as when you left me; only I have positive hopes that I shall be able to conquer that inveterate habit of smoking which you may remember I indulged in. I think of making a beginning this evening, viz., Sunday, 31st Aug., 1817, not Wednesday, the 2d Feb., 1818, as it will be perhaps when you read this for the first time. There is the

difficulty of writing from one end of the globe (hemispheres I call 'em) to another. Why, half the truths I have sent you in this letter will become lies before they reach you, and some of the lies (which I have mixed for variety's sake, and to exercise your judgment in the finding of them out) may be turned into sad realities before you shall be called upon to detect them. Such are the defects of going by different chronologies. Your now is not my now; and again, your then is not my then; but my now may be your then, and vice versa. Whose head is competent to these things?

“How does Mrs. Field get on in her geography? Does she know where she is by this time? I am not sure sometimes you are not in another planet; but then I don't like to ask Capt. Burney, or any of those that know any thing about it, for fear of exposing my ignorance.

“Our kindest remembrances, however, to Mrs. F., if she will accept of reminiscences from another planet, or at least another hemisphere.”

Lamb's intention of spending the rest of his days in the Middle Temple were not to be realised. The inconveniences of being in chambers began to be felt as he and his sister grew older, and in the

autumn of this year they removed to lodgings in Russell-street, Covent Garden, the corner house, delightfully situated between the two great theatres. In November 1817, Miss Lamb announced the removal to Miss Wordsworth in a letter, to which Lamb added the following :—

TO MISS WORDSWORTH.

“ Dear Miss Wordsworth,—Here we are, transplanted from our native soil. I thought we never could have been torn up from the Temple. Indeed it was an ugly wrench, but like a tooth, now ’tis out, and I am easy. We never can strike root so deep in any other ground. This, where we are, is a light bit of gardener’s mould, and if they take us up from it, it will cost no blood and groans, like mandrakes pulled up. We are in the individual spot I like best, in all this great city. The theatres, with all their noises. Covent Garden, dearer to me than any gardens of Alcinous, where we are morally sure of the earliest peas and ’sparagus. Bow-street, where the thieves are examined, within a few yards of us. Mary had not been here four-and-twenty hours before she saw a thief. She sits at the window working ; and casually

throwing out her eyes, she sees a concourse of people coming this way, with a constable to conduct the solemnity. These incidents agreeably diversify a female life.

* * * * *

“Mary has brought her part of this letter to an orthodox and loving conclusion, which is very well, for I have no room for pansies and remembrances. What a nice holyday I got on Wednesday by favour of a princess dying !

“C. L.”

CHAPTER XI.

[1818 to 1820.]

LETTERS TO WORDSWORTH, SOUTHEY, MANNING,
AND COLERIDGE.

LAMB, now in the immediate neighbourhood of the theatres, renewed the dramatic associations of his youth, which the failure of one experiment had not chilled. Although he rather loved to dwell on the recollections of the actors who had passed from the stage, than to mingle with the happy crowds who hailed the successive triumphs of Mr. Kean, he formed some new and steady theatrical attachments. His chief favourites of this time were Miss Kelly, Miss Burrell of the Olympic, and Munden. The first, then the sole support of the English Opera, became a frequent guest in Great Russell Street, and charmed the circle there by the heartiness of her manners, the delicacy and

gentleness of her remarks, and her unaffected sensibility, as much as she had done on the stage. Miss Burrell, a lady of more limited powers, but with a frank and noble style, was discovered by Lamb on one of the visits which he paid, on the invitation of his old friend Elliston, to the Olympic, where the lady performed the hero of that happy parody of Moncrieff's, *Giovanni in London*. To her Lamb devoted a little article, which he sent to the *Examiner*, in which he thus addresses her :—" But Giovanni, free, fine, frank-spirited, single-hearted creature, turning all the mischief into fun as harmless as toys, or children's *make believe*, what praise can we repay to you adequate to the pleasure which you have given us? We had better be silent, for you have no name, and our mention will but be thought fantastical. You have taken out the sting from the evil thing, by what magic we know not, for there are actresses of greater merit and likelihood than you. With you and your Giovanni our spirits will hold communion, whenever sorrow or suffering shall be our lot. We have seen you triumph over the infernal powers; and pain and Erebus, and the powers of darkness, are shapes of a dream." Miss Burrell soon married a person named Gold, and disap-

peared from the stage. To Munden in prose, and Miss Kelly in verse, Lamb has done ample justice.

Lamb's increasing celebrity, and universal kindness, rapidly increased the number of his visitors. He thus complained, in wayward mood, of them to Mrs. Wordsworth :—

TO MRS. WORDSWORTH.

“ East-India House, 18th Feb. 1818.

“ My dear Mrs. Wordsworth,—I have repeatedly taken pen in hand to answer your kind letter. My sister should more properly have done it, but she having failed, I consider myself answerable for her debts. I am now trying to do it in the midst of commercial noises, and with a quill which seems more ready to glide into arithmetical figures and names of gourds, cassia, cardemoms, aloes, ginger, or tea, than into kindly responses and friendly recollections. The reason why I cannot write letters at home, is, that I am never alone. Plato's—(I write to W. W. now)—Plato's double-animal parted never longed more to be reciprocally re-united in the system of its first creation, than I sometimes do to be but for a moment single and separate. Except my morning's walk to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am

never so. I cannot walk home from office, but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. All the morning I am pestered. I could sit and gravely cast up sums in great books, or compare sum with sum, and write 'paid' against this, and 'unpaid' against t'other, and yet reserve in some corner of my mind, 'some darling thoughts all my own'—faint memory of some passage in a book, or the tone of an absent friend's voice—a snatch of Miss Burrell's singing, or a gleam of Fanny Kelly's divine plain face. The two operations might be going on at the same time without thwarting, as the sun's two motions (earth's I mean), or, as I sometimes turn round till I am giddy, in my back parlour, while my sister is walking longitudinally in the front; or, as the shoulder of veal twists round with the spit, while the smoke wreathes up the chimney. But there are a set of amateurs of the Belles Lettres—the gay science—who come to me as a sort of rendezvous, putting questions of criticism, of British Institutions, Lalla Rookhs, &c.—what Coleridge said at the lecture last night—who have the form of reading men, but, for any possible use reading can be to them, but to talk of, might as well have been Ante-Cadmeans born, or have lain sucking out the

sense of an Egyptian hieroglyph as long as the pyramids will last, before they should find it. These pests worrit me at business, and in all its intervals, perplexing my accounts, poisoning my little salutary warming-time at the fire, puzzling my paragraphs if I take a newspaper, cramming in between my own free thoughts and a column of figures which had come to an amicable compromise but for them. Their noise ended, one of them, as I said, accompanies me home, lest I should be solitary for a moment; he at length takes his welcome leave at the door; up I go, mutton on table, hungry as hunter, hope to forget my cares, and bury them in the agreeable abstraction of mastication; knock at the door, in comes Mrs. ———, or M——, or Demi-gorgon, or my brother, or somebody, to prevent my eating alone—a process absolutely necessary to my poor wretched digestion. O, the pleasure of eating alone!—eating my dinner alone! let me think of it. But in they come, and make it absolutely necessary that I should open a bottle of orange—for my meat turns into stone when any one dines with me, if I have not wine. Wine can mollify stones; then *that* wine turns into acidity, acerbity, misanthropy, a hatred of my interrupters—(God bless 'em! I love some of

'em dearly), and with the hatred, a still greater aversion to their going away. Bad is the dead sea they bring upon me, choking and deadening, but worse is the deader dry sand they leave me on, if they go before bed time. Come never, I would say to these spoilers of my dinner; but if you come, never go! The fact is, this interruption does not happen very often, but every time it comes by surprise, that present bane of my life, orange wine, with all its dreary stifling consequences, follows. Evening company I should always like had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth!) and voices all the golden morning; and five evenings in a week, would be as much as I should covet to be in company, but I assure you that is a wonderful week in which I can get two, or one to myself. I am never C. L., but always C. L. & Co. He, who thought it not good for man to be alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself. I forget bed time, but even there these sociable frogs clamber up to annoy me. Once a week, generally some singular evening that! being alone, I go to bed at the hour I ought always to be a-bed; just close to my bed-room window is the club-room of a public-house, where a set of singers,

I take them to be chorus singers of the two theatres (it must be *both of them*), begin their orgies. They are a set of fellows (as I conceive) who, being limited by their talents to the burthen of the song at the play-houses, in revenge have got the common popular airs by Bishop, or some cheap composer, arranged for choruses, that is, to be sung all in chorus. At least, I never can catch any of the text of the plain song, nothing but the Babylonish choral howl at the tail on't. 'That fury being quench'd'—the howl I mean, a burden succeeds of shouts and clapping, and knocking of the table. At length overtasked nature drops under it, and escapes for a few hours into the society of the sweet silent creatures of dreams, which go away with mocks and mows at cockerow. And then I think of the words Christabel's father used (bless me, I have dipt in the wrong ink) to say every morning by way of variety when he awoke :

' Every knell the Baron saith,
Wakes us up to a world of death'—

or something like it. All I mean by this senseless interrupted tale, is, that by my central situation, I am a little over-companied. Not that I have any animosity against the good creatures that are so anxious to drive away the harpy soli-

tude from me. I like 'em, and cards, and a cheerful glass, but I mean merely to give you an idea between office confinement and after-office society, how little time I can call my own. I mean only to draw a picture, not to make an inference. I would not that I know of have it otherwise. I only wish sometimes I could exchange some of my faces and voices for the faces and voices which a late visitation brought most welcome, and carried away, leaving regret but more pleasure, even a kind of gratitude, at being so often favoured with that kind northern visitation. My London faces and noises don't hear me—I mean no disrespect, or I should explain myself, that instead of their return 220 times a year, and the return of W. W., &c., seven times in 104 weeks, some more equal distribution might be found. I have scarce room to put in Mary's kind love, and my poor name,

“ C. LAMB.

“—— goes on lecturing.—I mean to hear some of the course, but lectures are not much to my taste, whatever the lecturer may be. If *read*, they are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are brought together to hear a man read

his works which you could read so much better at leisure yourself; if delivered extempore, I am always in pain, lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honour of me at the London Tavern. 'Gentlemen,' said I, and there I stopped, the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying. Mrs. Wordsworth *will* go on, kindly haunting us with visions of seeing the lakes once more, which never can be realised. Between us there is a great gulf, not of inexplicable moral antipathies and distances, I hope, as there seemed to be between me and that gentleman concerned in the stamp-office, that I so strangely recoiled from at Haydon's. I think I had an instinct that he was the head of an office. I hate all such people — accountants' deputy accountants. The dear abstract notion of the East India Company, as long as she is unseen, is pretty, rather poetical; but as she makes herself manifest by the persons of such beasts, I loathe and detest her as the scarlet what-do-you-call-her of Babylon. I thought, after abridging us of all our red-letter days, they had done their worst, but I was deceived in the length to which heads of offices, those true liberty-haters, can go. They are the tyrants, not Ferdinand,

nor Nero—by a decree passed this week, they have abridged us of the immemorially-observed custom of going at one o'clock of a Saturday, the little shadow of a holyday left us. Dear W. W. be thankful for liberty."

Among Lamb's new acquaintances was Mr. Charles Ollier, a young bookseller of considerable literary talent, which he has since exhibited in the original and beautiful tale of "Inesilla," who proposed to him the publication of his scattered writings in a collected form. Lamb acceded; and nearly all he had then written in prose and verse, were published this year by Mr. Ollier and his brother, in two small and elegant volumes. Early copies were despatched to Southey and Wordsworth: the acknowledgments of the former of whom produced a reply, from which the following is an extract:—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

"Monday Oct. 26, 1818.

"Dear Southey,—I am pleased with your friendly remembrances of my little things. I do not know whether I have done a silly thing or a wise one, but it is of no great consequence. I run no risk, and care for no censures. My bread and cheese is stable

as the foundations of Leadenhall-street, and if it hold out as long as the ‘foundations of our empire in the East,’ I shall do pretty well. You and W. W. should have had your presentation copies more ceremoniously sent, but I had no copies when I was leaving town for my holydays, and rather than delay, commissioned my bookseller to send them thus nakedly. By not hearing from W. W. or you, I began to be afraid Murray had not sent them. I do not see S. T. C. so often as I could wish. I am *better than I deserve* to be. The hot weather has been such a treat! Mary joins in this little corner in kindest remembrance to you all.

“C. L.”

Lamb’s interest was strongly excited for Mr. Kenney on the production of his comedy, entitled “*A Word to the Ladies*.” Lamb had engaged to contribute the prologue; but the promise pressed hard upon him, and he procured the requisite quantity of verse from a very inferior hand. Kenney, who had married Holcroft’s widow, had more than succeeded to him in Lamb’s regards. Holcroft had considerable dramatic skill; great force and earnestness of style, and noble sincerity and uprightness of disposition; but he was an austere

observer of morals and manners; and even his grotesque characters were hardly and painfully sculptured; while Kenney, with as fine a perception of the ludicrous and the peculiar, was more airy, more indulgent, more graceful, and exhibited more frequent glimpses of "the gayest, happiest attitude of things." The comedy met with less success than the reputation of the author and brilliant experience of the past had rendered probable, and Lamb had to perform the office of comforter, as he had done on the more unlucky event to Godwin. To this play Lamb refers in the following note to Coleridge, who was contemplating a course of lectures on Shakspeare, and who sent Lamb a ticket with sad forebodings that the course would be his last.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"My dear Coleridge,—I have been in a state of incessant hurry ever since the receipt of your ticket. It found me incapable of attending you, it being the night of Kenney's new comedy. You know my local aptitudes at such a time; I have been a thorough rendezvous for all consultations; my head begins to clear up a little, but it has had bells in it. Thank you kindly for your ticket, though the mournful prognostic which accompanies

it certainly renders its permanent pretensions less marketable; but I trust to hear many a course yet. You excepted Christmas-week, by which I understood *next week*; I thought Christmas week was that which Christmas Sunday ushered in. We are sorry it never lies in your way to come to us; but, dear Mahomet, we will come to you. Will it be convenient to all the good people at Highgate, if we take a stage up, *not next Sunday*, but the following, viz. 3rd January, 1819—shall we be too late to catch a skirt of the old out-goer?—how the years crumble from under us! We shall hope to see you before then; but, if not, let us know if *then* will be convenient. Can we secure a coach home?

“ Believe me ever yours,

“ C. LAMB.

“ I have but one holyday, which is Christmas-day itself nakedly, no pretty garnish and fringes of St. John’s-day, Holy Innocents’, &c. that used to be stud it all around in the calendar. *Improbe labor!* I write six hours every day in this candle-light fog-den at Leadenhall.”

In the next year [1819], Lamb was greatly

pleased by the dedication to him of Wordsworth's poem of "The Waggoner," which Wordsworth had read to him in MS. thirteen years before. On receipt of the little volume, Lamb acknowledged it as follows.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"My dear Wordsworth,—You cannot imagine how proud we are here of the dedication. We read it twice for once that we do the poem. I mean all through; yet 'Benjamin' is no common favourite; there is a spirit of beautiful tolerance in it; it is as good as it was in 1806; and will be as good in 1829, if our dim eyes shall be awake to peruse it. Methinks there is a kind of shadowing affinity between the subject of the narrative and the subject of the dedication;—but I will not enter into personal themes, else, substituting
* * * * * for Ben, and the Honourable United Company of Merchants, trading to the East Indies, for the master of the misused team, it might seem, by no far-fetched analogy, to point its dim warnings hitherward; but I reject the omen, especially as its import seems to have been diverted to another victim.

"I will never write another letter with alter-

nate inks. You cannot imagine how it cramps the flow of the style. I can conceive, Pindar (I do not mean to compare myself to *him*), by the command of Hiero, the Sicilian tyrant (was not he the tyrant of some place? fie on my neglect of history); I can conceive him by command of Hiero or Perillus set down to pen an Isthmian or Nemean panegyric in lines, alternate red and black. I maintain he couldn't have done it; it would have been a strait-laced torture to his muse; he would have call'd for the bull for a relief. Neither could Lycidas, or the Chrorics (how do you like the word?) of Samson Agonistes, have been written with two inks. Your couplets with points, epilogues to Mr. H.'s, &c., might be even benefited by the twyfount, where one line (the second) is for point, and the first for rhyme. I think the alternation would assist, like a mould. I maintain it, you could not have written your stanzas on pre-existence with two inks. Try another; and Rogers, with his silver standish, having one ink only, I will bet my 'Ode on Tobacco' against the 'Pleasures of Memory,'—and 'Hope,' too, shall put more fervour of enthusiasm into the same subject than you can with your two; he shall do it *stans pede in uno*, as it were.

“The ‘Waggoner’ is very ill put up in boards, at least it seems to me always to open at the dedication; but that is a mechanical fault. I re-read the ‘White Doe of Rylstone;’ the title should be always written at length, as Mary Sabilla N——, a very nice woman of our acquaintance, always signs hers at the bottom of the shortest note. Mary told her, if her name had been Mary Ann, she would have signed M. A. N——, or M. only, dropping the A., which makes me think, with some other trifles, that she understands something of human nature. My pen goes galloping on most rhapsodically, glad to have escaped the bondage of two inks.

“Manning had just sent it home, and it came as fresh to me as the immortal creature it speaks of. M. sent it home with a note, having this passage in it: ‘I cannot help writing to you while I am reading Wordsworth’s poem. I have got into the third canto, and say that it raises my opinion of him very much indeed.*’ ’Tis broad, noble, poetical, with a masterly scanning of human actions, absolutely above common readers. What

* “N. B. M., from his peregrinations, is twelve or fourteen years *behind* in his knowledge of who has or has not written good verse of late.”

a manly (implied) interpretation of (bad) party-actions, as trampling the bible, &c.' and so he goes on.

"I do not know which I like best,—the prologue (the latter part especially) to P. Bell, or the epilogue to Benjamin. Yes, I tell stories; I do know I like the last best; and the 'Waggoner' altogether is a pleasanter remembrance to me than the 'Itinerant.' If it were not, the page before the first page would and ought to make it so.

"If, as you say, the 'Waggoner,' in some sort, came at my call, O for a potent voice to call forth the 'Recluse' from his profound dormitory, where he sleeps forgetful of his foolish charge—the world.

"Had I three inks, I would invoke him! 'Tal-four'd has written a most kind review of J. Woodvil, &c. in the 'Champion.' He is your most zealous admirer, in solitude and in crowds. H. Crabbe Robinson gives me any dear prints that I happen to admire, and I love him for it and for other things. Alsager shall have his copy, but at present I have lent it *for a day only*, not choosing to part with my own. Mary's love. How do you all do, amanuenses both—marital and sororal?

"C. LAMB."

The next letter which remains is addressed to Manning (returned to England, and domiciled in Hertfordshire), in the spring of 1819.

TO MR. MANNING.

“ My dear M.—I want to know how your brother is, if you have heard lately. I want to know about you. I wish you were nearer. How are my cousins, the Gladmans, of Wheathamstead, and farmer Bruton? Mrs. Bruton is a glorious woman.

‘ Hail, Mackery End’—

This is a fragment of a blank verse poem which I once meditated, but got no further.* The E. I. H. has been thrown into a quandary by the strange phenomenon of poor ——, whom I have known man and mad-man twenty-seven years, he being elder here than myself by nine years and more. He was always a pleasant, gossiping, half-headed, muzzy, dozing, dreaming, walk-about, inoffensive chap; a little too fond of the creature; who isn’t at times? but —— had not brains to work off

* See “ Mackery End, in Hertfordshire,” of Lamb’s Prose Works, Vol. ii., p. 171, for a charming account of a visit to their cousin in the country with Mr. Barron Field.

an over-night's surfeit by ten o'clock next morning, and, unfortunately, in he wandered the other morning drunk with last night, and with a super-foetation of drink taken in since he set out from bed. He came staggering under his double burthen, like trees in Java, bearing at once blossom, fruit, and falling fruit, as I have heard you or some other traveller tell, with his face literally as blue as the bluest firmament; some wretched calico that he had mopped his poor oozy front with had rendered up its native dye, and the devil a bit would he consent to wash it, but swore it was characteristic, for he was going to the sale of indigo, and set up a laugh which I did not think the lungs of mortal man were competent to. It was like a thousand people laughing, or the Goblin Page. He imagined afterwards that the whole office had been laughing at him, so strange did his own sounds strike upon his *nonsensorium*. But ——— has laugh'd his last laugh, and awoke the next day to find himself reduced from an abused income of 600*l.* per annum to one-sixth of the sum, after thirty-six years' tolerably good service. The quality of mercy was not strain'd in his behalf; the gentle dew's dropt not on him from heaven. It just came across me that I was writing to Canton. Will you drop in to-morrow

night? Fanny Kelly is coming, if she does not cheat us. Mrs. *Gold* is well, but proves ‘uncoin’d,’ as the lovers about Wheathamstead would say.

“I have not had such a quiet half hour to sit down to a quiet letter for many years. I have not been interrupted above four times. I wrote a letter the other day, in alternate lines, black ink and red, and you cannot think how it chilled the flow of ideas. Next Monday is Whit-Monday. What a reflection! Twelve years ago, and I should have kept that and the following holyday in the fields a Maying. All of those pretty pastoral delights are over. This dead, everlasting dead desk,—how it weighs the spirit of a gentleman down! This dead wood of the desk, instead of your living trees! But then again, I hate the Joskins, *a name for Hertfordshire bumpkins*. Each state of life has its inconvenience; but then again, mine has more than one. Not that I repine, or grudge, or murmur at my destiny. I have meat and drink, and decent apparel; I shall, at least, when I get a new hat.

“A red-haired man just interrupted me. He has broke the current of my thoughts. I haven’t a word to add. I don’t know why I send this letter, but I have had a hankering to hear about you some days. Perhaps it will go off before your reply

comes. If it don't, I assure you no letter was ever welcomer from you, from Paris or Macao.

“ C. LAMB.”

The following letter, dated 25th November, 1819, is addressed to Miss Wordsworth, on Wordsworth's youngest son visiting Lamb in London.

TO MISS WORDSWORTH.

“ Dear Miss Wordsworth,—You will think me negligent; but I wanted to see more of William before I ventured to express a prediction. Till yesterday I had barely seen him,—*Virgilium tantum vidi*,—but yesterday he gave us his small company to a bullock's heart, and I can pronounce him a lad of promise. He is no pedant, nor bookworm; so far I can answer. Perhaps he has hitherto paid too little attention to other men's inventions, preferring, like Lord Foppington, the ‘natural sprouts of his own.’ But he has observation, and seems thoroughly awake. I am ill at remembering other people's *bons mots*, but the following are a few:—Being taken over Waterloo Bridge, he remarked, that if we had no mountains, we had a fine river at least; which was a touch of the com-

parative: but then he added, in a strain which augured less for his future abilities as a political economist, that he supposed they must take at least a pound a week toll. Like a curious naturalist, he inquired if the tide did not come up a little salty. This being satisfactorily answered, he put another question, as to the flux and reflux; which being rather cunningly evaded than artfully solved by that she-Aristotle, Mary,—who muttered something about its getting up an hour sooner and sooner every day,—he sagely replied, ‘Then it must come to the same thing at last;’ which was a speech worthy of an infant Halley! The lion in the ‘Change by no means came up to his ideal standard; so impossible is it for Nature, in any of her works, to come up to the standard of a child’s imagination! The whelps (lionets) he was sorry to find were dead; and, on particular inquiry, his old friend the ourang outang had gone the way of all flesh also. The grand tiger was also sick, and expected in no short time to exchange this transitory world for another, or none. But again, there was a golden eagle (I do not mean that of Charing) which did much arride and console him. William’s genius, I take it, leans a little to the figurative; for, being at play at tricktrack, (a kind of minor billiard-table

which we keep for smaller wights, and sometimes refresh our own mature fatigues with taking a hand at,) not being able to hit a ball he had iterate aimed at, he cried out, ‘I cannot hit that beast.’ Now the balls are usually called men, but he felicitously hit upon a middle term; a term of approximation and imaginative reconciliation; a something where the two ends of the brute matter (ivory), and their human and rather violent personification into men, might meet, as I take it, illustrative of that excellent remark, in a certain preface about imagination, explaining ‘Like a sea-beast that had crawled forth to sun himself.’ Not that I accuse William Minor of hereditary plagiary, or conceive the image to have come from the paternal store. Rather he seemeth to keep aloof from any source of imitation, and purposely to remain ignorant of what mighty poets have done in this kind before him; for, being asked if his father had ever been on Westminster Bridge, he answered that he did not know!

“It is hard to discern the oak in the acorn, or a temple like St. Paul’s in the first stone which is laid; nor can I quite prefigure what destination the genius of William Minor hath to take. Some few hints I have set down, to guide my future observations. He hath the power of calculation, in

no ordinary degree for a chit. He combineth figures, after the first boggle, rapidly; as in the tricktrack board, where the hits are figured, at first he did perceive that 15 and 7 made 22, but by a little use he could combine 8 with 25, and 33 again with 16, which approacheth something in kind (far let me be from flattering him by saying in degree) to that of the famous American boy. I am sometimes inclined to think I perceive the future satirist in him, for he hath a sub-sardonic smile which bursteth out upon occasion; as when he was asked if London were as big as Ambleside; and indeed no other answer was given, or proper to be given, to so ensnaring and provoking a question. In the contour of skull, certainly I discern something paternal. But whether in all respects the future man shall transcend his father's fame, Time, the trier of Geniuses, must decide. Be it pronounced peremptorily at present, that William is a well-mannered child, and though no great student, hath yet a lively eye for things that lie before him.

“ Given in haste from my desk at Leadenhall.

“ Yours, and yours most sincerely,

“ C. LAMB.”

CHAPTER XII.

[1820 to 1823.]

LETTERS TO WORDSWORTH, COLERIDGE, FIELD,
WILSON, AND BARTON.

THE widening circle of Lamb's literary friends now embraced additional authors and actors,—famous, or just bursting into fame. He welcomed in the author of the “Dramatic Scenes,” who chose to appear in print as Barry Cornwall, a spirit most congenial with his own in its serious moods,—one whose genius he had assisted to impel towards its kindred models, the great dramatists of Elizabeth's time, and in whose success he received the first and best reward of the efforts he had made to inspire a taste for these old masters of humanity. Mr. Macready, who had just emancipated himself from the drudgery of representing the villains of tragedy, by his splendid performance of *Richard*, was

introduced to him by his old friend Charles Lloyd, who had visited London for change of scene, under great depression of spirits. Lloyd owed a debt of gratitude to Macready which exemplified the true uses of the acted drama with a force which it would take many sermons of its stoutest opponents to reason away. A deep gloom had gradually overcast his mind, and threatened wholly to encircle it, when he was induced to look in at Covent Garden Theatre and witness the performance of *Rob Roy*. The picture which he then beheld of the generous outlaw,—the frank, gallant, noble bearing,—the air and movements, as of one “free of mountain solitudes,”—the touches of manly pathos and irresistible cordiality, delighted and melted him, won him from his painful introspections, and brought to him the unwonted relief of tears. He went home “a *gayer* and a wiser man;” returned again to the theatre, whenever the healing enjoyments could be renewed there; and sought the acquaintance of the actor who had broken the melancholy spell in which he was enthralled, and had restored the pulses of his nature to their healthful beatings. The year 1820 gave Lamb an interest in Macready beyond that which he had derived from the introduction of Lloyd, arising from the power with which he animated the first pro-

duction of one of his oldest friends—"Virginus." Knowles had been a friend and disciple of Hazlitt from a boy; and Lamb had liked and esteemed him as a hearty companion; but he had not guessed at the extraordinary dramatic power which lay ready for kindling in his brain, and still less at the delicacy of tact with which he had unveiled the sources of the most profound affections. Lamb had almost lost his taste for acted tragedy, as the sad realities of life had pressed more nearly on him; yet he made an exception in favour of the first and happiest part of "Virginus," those paternal scenes, which stand alone in the modern drama, and which Macready informed with the fulness of a father's affection.

The establishment of the "London Magazine," under the auspices of Mr. John Scott, occasioned Lamb's introduction to the public by the name, under colour of which he acquired his most brilliant reputation—"Elia." The adoption of this signature was purely accidental. His first contribution to the magazine was a description of the Old South-Sea House, where Lamb had passed a few months' noviciate as a clerk, thirty years before, and of its inmates who had long passed away; and remembering the name of a gay, light-hearted

foreigner, who fluttered there at that time, he subscribed his name to the essay. It was afterwards affixed to subsequent contributions; and Lamb used it until, in his "Last Essays of Elia," he bade it a sad farewell.

The perpetual influx of visitors whom he could not repel; whom indeed he was always glad to welcome, but whose visits unstrung him, induced him to take lodgings at Dalston, to which he occasionally retired when he wished for repose. The deaths of some who were dear to him cast a melancholy tinge on his mind, as may be seen in the following:—

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

"20th March, 1822.

"My dear Wordsworth,—A letter from you is very grateful; I have not seen a Kendal postmark so long! We are pretty well, save colds and rheumatics, and a certain deadness to every thing, which I think I may date from poor John's loss, and another accident or two at the same time, that has made me almost bury myself at Dalston, where yet I see more faces than I could wish. Deaths upset one, and put one out long after the recent grief. Two or three have died within

this last two twelvemonths, and so many parts of me have been numbed. One sees a picture, reads an anecdote, starts a casual fancy, and thinks to tell of it to this person in preference to every other : the person is gone whom it would have peculiarly suited. It won't do for another. Every departure destroys a class of sympathies. There's Capt. Burney gone ! What fun has whist now ; what matters it what you lead, if you can no longer fancy him looking over you ? One never hears any thing, but the image of the particular person occurs with whom alone almost you would care to share the intelligence—thus one distributes oneself about—and now for so many parts of me I have lost the market. Common natures do not suffice me. Good people, as they are called, won't serve. I want individuals. I am made up of queer points, and I want so many answering needles. The going away of friends does not make the remainder more precious. It takes so much from them as there was a common link. A. B. and C. make a party. A. dies. B. not only loses A. ; but all A.'s part in C. C. loses A.'s part in B., and so the alphabet sickens by subtraction of interchangeables. I express myself muddily, *capite dolente*. I have a dulling cold. My theory is to

enjoy life, but my practice is against it. I grow ominously tired of official confinement. Thirty years have I served the Philistines, and my neck is not subdued to the yoke. You don't know how wearisome it is to breathe the air of four pent walls, without relief, day after day, all the golden hours of the day between ten and four, without ease or interposition. *Tædet me harum quotidianarum formarum*, these pestilential clerk-faces always in one's dish. O for a few years between the grave and the desk! they are the same, save that at the latter you are the outside machine. The foul enchanter —, 'letters four do form his name'—Busirare is his name in hell—that has curtailed you of some domestic comforts, hath laid a heavier hand on me, not in present infliction, but in the taking away the hope of enfranchisement. I dare not whisper to myself a pension on this side of absolute incapacitation and infirmity, till years have sucked me dry;—*Otium cum indignitate*. I had thought in a green old age (O green thought!) to have retired to Ponder's End, emblematic name, how beautiful! in the Ware Road, there to have made up my accounts with heaven and the company, toddling about between it and Cheshunt, anon stretching, on some fine Isaac

Walton morning to Hoddesdon or Amwell, careless as a beggar; but walking, walking ever till I fairly walked myself off my legs, dying walking! The hope is gone. I sit like Philomel all day (but not singing,) with my breast against this thorn of a desk, with the only hope that some pulmonary affliction may relieve me. *Vide* Lord Palmerston's report of the clerks in the war-office, (Debates this morning's 'Times,') by which it appears, in twenty years as many clerks have been coughed and catarrhed out of it into their freer graves. Thank you for asking about the pictures. Milton hangs over my fire-side in Covent Garden, (when I am there,) the rest have been sold for an old song, wanting the eloquent tongue that should have set them off! You have gratified me with liking my meeting with Dodd.* For the Malvolio story—the thing is become in verity a sad task, and I eke it out with any thing. If I could slip out of it I should be happy, but our chief-reputed assistants have forsaken us. The Opium-Eater crossed us once with a dazzling path, and hath as suddenly left us darkling; and, in short, I shall go on from dull to worse, because I cannot resist the book-

* See the account of the meeting between Dodd and Jem White, in Elia's Essay, "On some of the Old Actors."—Lamb's Prose Works, Vol. ii., p. 314.

sellers' importunity—the old plea you know of authors, but I believe on my part sincere. Hartley I do not so often see; but I never see him in unwelcome hour. I thoroughly love and honour him. I send you a frozen epistle, but it is winter and dead time of the year with me. May heaven keep something like spring and summer up with you, strengthen your eyes, and make mine a little lighter to encounter with them, as I hope they shall yet and again, before all are closed.

“Yours, with every kind remembrance.

“C. L.

“I had almost forgot to say, I think you thoroughly right about presentation copies. I should like to see you print a book I should grudge to purchase for its size. Hang me, but I would have it though!”

The following letter, containing the germ of the well-known “Dissertation on Roast Pig,” was addressed to Coleridge, who had received a pig as a present, and attributed it erroneously to Lamb.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

“Dear C.—It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well—they are interesting creatures at a certain age—what a pity such

buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon ! You had all some of the crackling—and brain sauce—did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis ? Did the eyes come away kindly, with no Œdipean avulsion ? Was the crackling the colour of the ripe pomegranate ? Had you no cursed compliment of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire ? Did you flesh maiden teeth in it ? Not that I sent the pig, nor can form the remotest guess what part O—— could play in the business. I never knew him give anything away in my life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig, after all, was meant for me ; but at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things I could never think of sending away. Teals, widgeons, snipes, barn-door-fowl, ducks, geese—your tame villalio things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled, your potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self extended ; but pardon me if I stop somewhere—where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a

higher smack than the sensual rarity, there my friends (or any good man) may command me ; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs I ever felt of remorse was when a child—my kind old aunt had strained her pocket strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plum-cake upon me. In my way home through the Borough, I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant,—but thereabouts; a look-beggar, not a verbal petitioner; and in the coxcombry of taught-charity, I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in' all the pride of an Evangelical peacock, when of a sudden my old aunt's kindness crossed me; the sum it was to her; the pleasure she had a right to expect that I—not the old impostor—should take in eating her cake; the cursed ingratitude by which, under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like—and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy, and proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated,

consigned to dunghill with the ashes of that unseasonable pauper.

“ But when Providence, who is better to us all than our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and my fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor’s purpose.

“ Yours (short of pig) to command in every thing,

“ C. L.”

In the summer of 1822, Lamb and his sister visited Paris. The following is a hasty letter addressed to Field on his return.

TO MR. BARRON FIELD.

“ My dear F.—I scribble hastily at office. Frank wants my letter presently. I and sister are just returned from Paris!! We have eaten frogs. It has been such a treat! Frogs are the nicest little delicate things—rabbity-flavoured. Imagine a Lilliputian rabbit! They fricassee them; but in my mind, drest, seethed, plain, with parsley and butter, would have been the decision of Apicius. Paris is a glorious picturesque old city. London looks mean and new to it, as the town of Washington

would, seen after it. But they have no St. Paul's, or Westminster Abbey. The Seine, so much despised by Cockneys, is exactly the size to run through a magnificent street; palaces a mile long on one side, lofty Edinbro' stone (O the glorious antiques!) houses on the other. The Thames disunites London and Southwark. I had Talma to supper with me. He has picked up, as I believe, an authentic portrait of Shakspeare. He paid a broker about 40*l.* English for it. It is painted on the one half of a pair of bellows—a lovely picture, corresponding with the folio head. The bellows has old carved *wings* round it, and round the visnomy is inscribed, as near as I remember, not divided into rhyme—I found out the rhyme—

Whom have we here
 Stuck on this bellows,
 But the Prince of good fellows,
 Willy Shakspeare?

At top—

O base and coward luck!
 To be here stuck.

POINS.

At bottom—

Nay! rather a glorious lot is to him assign'd,
 Who, like the Almighty, rides upon the *wind*.

IS10L.

“ This is all in old carved wooden letters. The countenance smiling, sweet, and intellectual beyond measure, even as he was immeasurable. It may be a forgery. They laugh at me and tell me, Ireland is in Paris, and has been putting off a portrait of the Black Prince. How far old wood may be imitated I cannot say. Ireland was not found out by his parchments, but by his poetry. I am confident no painter on either side the channel could have painted any thing near like the face I saw. Again, would such a painter and forger have taken 40*l.* for a thing, if authentic, worth 4,000*l.*? Talma is not in the secret, for he had not even found out the rhymes in the first inscription. He is coming over with it, and, my life to Southey’s Thalaba, it will gain universal faith.

“ The letter is wanted, and I am wanted. Imagine the blank filled up with all kind things.

“ Our joint hearty remembrances to both of you. Yours, as ever,

“ C. LAMB.

“ Sept. 22, 1822.”

Soon after Lamb’s return from Paris he became acquainted with the poet of the Quakers, Bernard Barton, who, like himself, was engaged

in the drudgery of figures. The pure and gentle tone of the poems of his new acquaintance was welcome to Lamb, who had more sympathy with the truth of nature in modest guise than in the affected fury of Lord Byron, or the dreamy extravagancies of Shelley. Lamb had written in "Elia" of the Society of Friends with the freedom of one who, with great respect for the principles of the founders of their faith, had little in common with a sect who shunned the pleasures while they mingled in the business of the world; and a friendly expostulation on the part of Mr. Barton led to such cordial excuses as completely won the heart of the Quaker bard. Some expression which Lamb let fall at their meeting in London, from which Mr. Barton had supposed that Lamb objected to a Quaker's writing poetry as inconsistent with his creed, induced Mr. Barton to write to Lamb on his return to Woodbridge, who replied as follows.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"India House, 11th Sept. 1822.

"Dear sir,—You have misapprehended me sadly, if you suppose that I meant to impute any inconsistency in your writing poetry with your religious profession. I do not remember what I

said, but it was spoken sportively, I am sure—one of my levities, which you are not so used to as my older friends. I probably was thinking of the light in which your so indulging yourself would appear to Quakers, and put their objection into my own mouth. I would eat my words (provided they should be written on not very coarse paper) rather than I would throw cold water upon your, and my once, harmless occupation.

“I have read Napoleon and the rest with delight. I like them for what they are, and for what they are not. I have sickened on the modern rhodomontade and Byronism, and your plain Quakerish beauty has captivated me. It is all wholesome eates, aye, and toothsome too, and withal Quakerish. If I were George Fox, and George Fox licenser of the press, they should have my absolute *imprimatur*. I hope I have removed the impression.

“I am, like you, a prisoner to the desk. I have been chained to that galley thirty years; a long shot. I have almost grown to the wood. If no *imaginative*, I am sure I am a *figurative* writer. Do friends allow puns? *verbal* equivocations?—they are unjustly accused of it, and I did my best in the ‘Imperfect Sympathies’ to vindicate them.

I am very tired of clerking it, but have no remedy. Did you see a Sonnet to this purpose in the Examiner?—

‘ *Who* first invented work, and bound the free
And holy-day rejoicing spirit down
To the ever-haunting importunity
Of business, in the green fields and the town,
To plough, loom, anvil, spade; and oh, most sad,
To that dry drudgery at the desk’s dead wood?
Who but the being unblest, alien from good,
Sabbathless Satan! he who his unglad
Task ever plies ’mid rotatory burnings,
That round and round incalculably reel;
For wrath Divine hath made him like a wheel
In that red realm from which are no returnings;
Where, toiling and turmoiling, ever and aye,
He and his thoughts keep pensive working-day.’

“I fancy the sentiment exprest above will be nearly your own. The expression of it probably would not so well suit with a follower of John Woolman. But I do not know whether diabolism is a part of your creed, or where, indeed, to find an exposition of your creed at all. In feelings and matters not dogmatical, I hope I am half a Quaker. Believe me, with great respect, yours,

“C. LAMB.

“I shall always be happy to see or hear from you.”

Encouraged by Lamb's kindness, Mr. Barton continued the correspondence, which became the most frequent in which Lamb had engaged for many years. The following letter is in acknowledgment of a publication of Mr. Barton's, chiefly directed to oppose the theories and tastes of Lord Byron and his friends.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

" East-India House, 9th Oct. 1822.

" Dear sir,—I am ashamed not sooner to have acknowledged your letter and poem. I think the latter very temperate, very serious, and very seasonable. I do not think it will convert the club at Pisa, neither do I think it will satisfy the bigots on our side the water. Something like a parody on the song of Ariel would please them better :

' Full fathom five the Atheist lies,
Of his bones are hell-dice made.'

" I want time and fancy to fill up the rest. I sincerely sympathise with you in your confinement. Of time, health, and riches, the first in order is not last in excellence. Riches are chiefly good, because they give us time. What a weight of wearisome prison hours have I to look back and forward to, as quite cut out of life; and the sting

of the thing is, that for six hours every day I have no business which I could not contract into two, if they would let me work task work.

* * * * *

“ I am returning a poor letter. I was formerly a great scribbler in that way, but my hand is out of order. If I said my head too, I should not be very much out, but I will tell no tales of myself; I will therefore end (after my best thanks, with a hope to see you again some time in London), begging you to accept this letteret for a letter—a leveret makes a better present than a grown hare, and short troubles (as the old excuse goes) are best.

“ I remain, dear sir, yours truly,

“ C. LAMB.”

The next letter will speak for itself.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ 23rd Dec. 1822.

“ Dear sir,—I have been so distracted with business and one thing or other, I have not had a quiet quarter of an hour for epistolary purposes. Christmas, too, is come, which always puts a rattle into my morning scull. It is a visiting, unquiet,

unquakerish season. I get more and more in love with solitude, and proportionately hampered with company. I hope you have some holidays at this period. I have one day—Christmas-day; alas! too few to commemorate the season. All work and no play dulls me. Company is not play, but many times hard work. To play, is for a man to do what he pleases, or to do nothing—to go about soothing his particular fancies. I have lived to a time of life to have outlived the good hours, the nine o'clock suppers, with a bright hour or two to clear up in afterwards. Now you cannot get tea before that hour, and then sit gaping, music-bothered perhaps, till half-past twelve brings up the tray; and what you steal of convivial enjoyment after, is heavily paid for in the disquiet of to-morrow's head.

“I am pleased with your liking ‘John Woodvil,’ and amused with your knowledge of our drama being confined to Shakspeare and Miss Baillie. What a world of fine territory between Land’s End and Johnny Groat’s have you missed traversing! I could almost envy you to have so much to read. I feel as if I had read all the books I want to read. Oh! to forget Fielding, Steele, &c. &c. and read ’em *new*!

“ Can you tell me a likely place where I could pick up, cheap, Fox’s Journal? There are no Quaker circulating libraries! Elwood, too, I must have. I rather grudge that S—— has taken up the history of your people; I am afraid he will put in some levity. I am afraid I am not quite exempt from that fault in certain magazine articles, where I have introduced mention of them. Were they to do again, I would reform them. Why should not you write a poetical account of your old worthies, deducing them from Fox to Woolman? but I remember you did talk of something of that kind, as a counterpart to the ‘ Ecclesiastical Sketches.’ But would not a poem be more consecutive than a string of sonnets? You have no martyrs *quite to the fire*, I think, among you; but plenty of heroic confessors, spirit-martyrs, lamb-lions. Think of it; it would be better than a series of sonnets on ‘ Eminent Bankers.’ I like a hit at our way of life, though it does well for me, better than any thing short of *all one’s time to one’s self*; for which alone I rankle with envy at the rich. Books are good, and pictures are good, and money to buy them therefore good, but to buy *time*! in other words, life!

“ The ‘ Compliments of the Time’ to you, should

end my letter ; to a Friend, I suppose, I must say the ‘ Sincerity of the Season : ’ I hope they both mean the same. With excuses for this hastily-penned note, believe me, with great respect,

“ C. LAMB.”

In this winter Mr. Walter Wilson, one of the friends of Lamb’s youth, applied to him for information respecting De Foe, whose life he was about to write. The renewal of the acquaintance was very pleasant to Lamb ; who many years before used to take daily walks with Wilson, and to call him “ brother.” The following is Lamb’s reply.

TO MR. WALTER WILSON.

“ E. I. H., 16th December, 1822.

“ Dear Wilson,—*Lightning* I was going to call you. You must have thought me negligent in not answering your letter sooner. But I have a habit of never writing letters but at the office ; ’tis so much time cribbed out of the Company ; and I am but just got out of the thick of a tea-sale, in which most of the entry of notes, deposits, &c., usually falls to my share.

“ I have nothing of De Foe’s but two or three novels, and the ‘ Plague History.’ I can give you no information about him. As a slight general

character of what I remember of them (for I have not look'd into them latterly), I would say that, in the appearance of *truth*, in all the incidents and conversations that occur in them, they exceed any works of fiction I am acquainted with. It is perfect illusion. The *author* never appears in these self-narratives (for so they ought to be called, or rather auto-biographies), but the *narrator* chains us down to an implicit belief in every thing he says. There is all the minute detail of a log-book in it. Dates are painfully pressed upon the memory. Facts are repeated over and over in varying phrases, till you cannot chuse but believe them. It is like reading evidence in a court of justice. So anxious the story-teller seems, that the truth should be clearly comprehended, that when he has told us a matter-of-fact, or a motive, in a line or two farther down he *repeats* it, with his favourite figure of speech, 'I say,' so and so, though he had made it abundantly plain before. This is in imitation of the common people's way of speaking, or rather of the way in which they are addressed by a master or mistress, who wishes to impress something upon their memories, and has a wonderful effect upon matter-of-fact readers. Indeed, it is to such principally that he writes. His

style is every-where beautiful, but plain and *homely*. Robinson Crusoe is delightful to all ranks and classes, but it is easy to see that it is written in phraseology peculiarly adapted to the lower conditions of readers; hence it is an especial favourite with seafaring men, poor boys, servant maids, &c. His novels are capital kitchen-reading, while they are worthy, from their deep interest, to find a shelf in the libraries of the wealthiest, and the most learned. His passion for *matter-of-fact narrative* sometimes betrayed him into a long relation of common incidents, which might happen to any man, and have no interest but the intense appearance of truth in them, to recommend them. The whole latter half or two thirds of ‘Colonel Jack’ is of this description. The beginning of ‘Colonel Jack’ is the most affecting natural picture of a young thief that was ever drawn. His losing the stolen money in the hollow of a tree, and finding it again when he was in despair, and then being in equal distress at not knowing how to dispose of it, and several similar touches in the early history of the Colonel, evince a deep knowledge of human nature; and putting out of question the superior *romantic* interest of the latter, in my mind very much exceed Crusoe. ‘Roxana’ (first edition) is the next in interest,

though he left out the best part of it in subsequent editions from a foolish hypercriticism of his friend Southerne. But ‘Moll Flanders,’ the ‘Account of the Plague,’ &c. are all of one family, and have the same stamp of character. Believe me, with friendly recollections, *Brother* (as I used to call you),

“Yours,

“C. LAMB.”

How bitterly Lamb felt his East-India bondage has abundantly appeared from his letters during many years. Yet there never was wanting a secret consciousness of the benefits which it ensured for him, the precious independence which he won by his hours of toil, and the freedom of his mind, to work only “at its own sweet will,” which his confinement to the desk obtained. This sense of the blessings which a fixed income, derived from ascertained duties, confers, broke out on the wish of his fellow-labourer, Bernard Barton, to cast off the trammels of the banking-house, and rely on literature for subsistence; and in the generous dissuasion of his friend from an act of folly, which he had perhaps been tempted to contemplate by Lamb’s own complainings, made a noble amends to

his ledger for all his unjust reproaches. The references to the booksellers have the colouring of fantastical exaggeration, by which he delighted to give effect to the immediate feeling; but making allowance for this mere play of fancy, how just is the following advice—how wholesome for every youth who hesitates whether he shall abandon the certain reward of plodding industry for the splendid miseries of authorship! *

* It is singular that, some years before, Mr. Barton had received similar advice from a very different poet—Lord Byron. As the letter has never been published, and it may be interesting to compare the expressions of two men so different on the same subject, I subjoin it here:—

“ TO BERNARD BARTON, ESQ.

“ St. James' Street, June 1, 1812.

“ Sir—The most satisfactory answer to the concluding part of your letter is, that Mr. Murray will republish your volume, if you still retain your inclination for the experiment, which I trust will be successful. Some weeks ago my friend Mr. Rogers showed me some of the stanzas in MS., and I then expressed my opinion of their merit, which a further perusal of the printed volume has given me no reason to revoke. I mention this, as it may not be disagreeable to you to learn, that I entertained a very favourable opinion of your powers before I was aware that such sentiments were reciprocal. Waving your obliging expressions as to my own productions, for which I thank you very sincerely, and assure you that I think not lightly of the praise of one whose approbation is valuable; will you allow me to talk to you candidly, not critically, on the subject of yours? You will not suspect me of a wish to discourage, since I pointed out to the publisher the propriety of complying with your wishes. I think more highly of your

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ 9th January, 1823.

“ Throw yourself on the world without any rational plan of support, beyond what the chance employ of booksellers would afford you !

“ Throw yourself rather, my dear sir, from the steep Tarpeian rock, slap-dash headlong upon iron

poetical talents than it would perhaps gratify you to have expressed, for I believe, from what I observe of your mind, that you are above flattery. To come to the point, you deserve success ; but we knew before Addison wrote his Cato, that desert does not always command it. But suppose it attained,

‘ You know what ills the author’s life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.’

Do not renounce writing, *but never trust entirely to authorship*. If you have a profession, retain it ; it will be like Prior’s fellowship, a last and sure resource. Compare Mr. Rogers with other authors of the day ; assuredly he is among the first of living poets, but is it to that he owes his station in society, and his intimacy in the best circles ? —no, it is to his prudence and respectability. The world (a bad one, I own) courts him because he has no occasion to court it. He is a poet, nor is he less so because he is something more. I am not sorry to hear that you were not tempted by the vicinity of Capel Lofft, Esq. —though, if he had done for you what he has for the Bloomfields, I should never have laughed at his rage for patronizing. But a truly well constituted mind will ever be independent. That you may be so is my sincere wish ; and if others think as well of your poetry as I do, you will have no cause to complain of your readers. Believe me,

“ Your obliged and obedient servant,

“ BYRON.”

spikes. If you have but five consolatory minutes between the desk and the bed, make much of them, and live a century in them, rather than turn slave to the booksellers. They are 'Turks and Tartars when they have poor authors at their beck. Hitherto you have been at arm's length from them. Come not within their grasp. I have known many authors want for bread, some repining, others enjoying the blessed security of a spunging-house, all agreeing they had rather have been tailors, weavers—what not? rather than the things they were. I have known some starved, some to go mad, one dear friend literally dying in a workhouse. You know not what a rapacious set these booksellers are. Ask even Southey, who (a single case almost) has made a fortune by book-drudgery, what he has found them. O you know not, may you never know, the miseries of subsisting by authorship! 'Tis a pretty appendage to a situation like yours or mine; but a slavery, worse than all slavery, to be a bookseller's dependant, to drudge your brains for pots of ale, and breasts of mutton, *to change your FREE THOUGHTS and VOLUNTARY NUMBERS for ungracious TASK-WORK.* The booksellers hate us. The reason I take to be, that

contrary to other trades, in which the master gets all the credit, (a jeweller or silversmith for instance,) and the journeyman, who really does the fine work, is in the back-ground: in *our* work the world gives all the credit to us, whom *they* consider as *their* journeymen, and therefore do they hate us, and cheat us, and oppress us, and would wring the blood of us out, to put another sixpence in their mechanic pouches !

* * * * *

“Keep to your bank, and the bank will keep you. Trust not to the public; you may hang, starve, drown yourself for any thing that worthy *personage* cares. I bless every star, that Providence, not seeing good to make me independent, has seen it next good to settle me upon the stable foundation of Leadenhall. Sit down, good B. B., in the banking-office; what! is there not from six to eleven, P.M. six days in the week, and is there not all Sunday? Fie, what a superfluity of man’s time, if you could think so! Enough for relaxation, mirth, converse, poetry, good thoughts, quiet thoughts. O the corroding, torturing, tormenting thoughts, that disturb the brain of the unlucky wight, who must draw upon it for daily sustenance! Henceforth I retract all my fond complaints of

mercantile employment ; look upon them as lover's quarrels. I was but half in earnest. Welcome dead timber of the desk, that gives me life. A little grumbling is a wholesome medicine for the spleen, but in my inner heart do I approve and embrace this our close, but unharassing way of life. I am quite serious. If you can send me Fox, I will not keep it *six weeks*, and will return it, with warm thanks to yourself and friend, without blot or dog's-ear. You will much oblige me by this kindness.

“ Yours truly,

“ C. LAMB.”

Lamb thus communicated to Mr. Barton his prosecution of his researches into Primitive Quakerism.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ February, 1823.

“ My dear sir,—I have read quite through the ponderous folio of George Fox. Pray how may I return it to Mr. Skewell, at Ipswich ? I fear to send such a treasure by a stage-coach ; not that I am afraid of the coachman or the guard *reading it*, but it might be lost. Can you put me in a way of

sending it safely? The kind-hearted owner trusted it to me for six *months*; I think I was about as many *days* in getting through it, and I do not think that I skipt a word of it. I have quoted G. F. in my 'Quaker's Meeting,' as having said he was 'lifted up in spirit,' (which I felt at the time to be not a Quaker phrase) 'and the judge and the jury were as dead men under his feet.' I find no such words in his journal, and I did not get them from Sewell, and the latter sentence I am sure I did not mean to invent; I must have put some other Quaker's words into his mouth. Is it a fatality in me, that every thing I touch turns into 'a lye?' I once quoted two lines from a translation of Dante, which Hazlitt very greatly admired, and quoted in a book as proof of the stupendous power of that poet, but no such lines are to be found in the translation, which has been searched for the purpose. I must have dreamed them, for I am quite certain I did not forge them knowingly. What a misfortune to have a lying memory! Your description of Mr. M^{rs} ~~_____~~'s place makes me long for a pippin and some carraways, and a cup of sack, in his orchard, when the sweets of the night came in. Farewell.

“ C. LAMB.”

In the beginning of the year 1823, the “*Essays of Elia*,” collected in a volume, were published by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, who had become the proprietors of the “*London Magazine*.” The book met with a rapid sale, while the magazine in which its contents had appeared, declined. The anecdote of the three Quakers gravely walking out of the inn where they had taken tea on the road, on an extortionate demand, one after the other, without paying anything*, had excited some gentle remonstrance on the part of Barton’s sister, to which Lamb thus replied.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“Dear sir,—The approbation of my little book by your sister is very pleasing to me. The Quaker incident did not happen to me, but to Carlisle the surgeon, from whose mouth I have twice heard it, at an interval of ten or twelve years, with little or no variation, and have given it exactly as I could remember it. The gloss which your sister or you have put upon it, does not strike me as correct. Carlisle drew no inference from it against the honesty of the Quakers, but only in favour of their

* See Elia’s “*Imperfect Sympathies*.”—*Prose Works*, ii. 132.

surprising coolness; that they should be capable of committing a good joke, with an utter insensibility to its being any jest at all. I have reason to believe in the truth of it, because, as I have said, I heard him repeat it without variation at such an interval. The story loses sadly in print, for Carlisle is the best story-teller I ever heard. The idea of the discovery of roasting pigs, I also borrowed from my friend Manning, and am willing to confess both my plagiarisms. Should fate so order it that you shall be in town with your sister, mine bids me say, that she shall have great pleasure in being introduced to her.

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“ They have dragged me again into the magazine, but I feel the spirit of the thing in my own mind quite gone. ‘Some brains’ (I think Ben Jonson says it) ‘will endure but one skinning. We are about to have an inundation of poetry from the Lakes—Wordsworth and Southey are coming up strong from the north. How did you like Hartley’s sonnets? The first, at least, is vastly fine. I am ashamed of the shabby letters send, but I am by nature any thing but neat. Therein my mother bore me no Quaker. I never could seal a letter without dropping the wax on

one side, besides scalding my fingers. I never had a seal, too, of my own. Writing to a great man lately, who is moreover very heraldic, I borrowed a seal of a friend, who by the female side claims the protectoral arms of Cromwell. How they must have puzzled my correspondent! My letters are generally charged as double at the Post-Office, from their inveterate clumsiness of foldure; so you must not take it disrespectful to yourself, if I send you such ungainly scraps. I think I lose £100 a year at the India House, owing solely to my want of neatness in making up accounts. How I puzzle 'em out at last is the wonder. I have to do with millions!

“It is time to have done my incoherencies.

“Believe me, yours truly,

“C. LAMB.”

Lamb thus records a meeting with the poets.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“April, 1823.

“Dear sir,—I wished for you yesterday.

dined in Parnassus, with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Rogers, and Tom Moore,—half the poetry of England constellated and clustered in Gloucester

Place! It was a delightful evening! Coleridge was in his finest vein of talk—had all the talk; and let 'em talk as they will of the envy of poets, I am sure not one there but was content to be nothing but a listener. The Muses were dumb, while Apollo lectured, on his and their fine art. It is a lie that poets are envious; I have known the best of them, and can speak to it, that they give each other their merits, and are the kindest critics as well as the best authors. I am scribbling a muddy epistle with an aching head, for we did not quaff Hippocrene last night; marry, it was hippocrass rather. Pray accept this as a letter in the mean time."

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Here is an apology for a letter, referring to the vignette on the title page of one of his friend's books.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

" May, 1823.

" Dear Sir—I am vexed to be two letters in your debt, but I have been quite out of the vein lately. A philosophical treatise is wanting, of the causes of the backwardness with which persons after a certain time of life set about writing a letter.

I always feel as if I had nothing to say, and the performance generally justifies the presentiment.

* * * * *

“ I do not exactly see why the goose and little goslings should emblemize *a Quaker-poet that has no children* or but one. But after all perhaps it is a pelican. The ‘ *Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin*’ around it I cannot decypher. The songster of the night pouring out her effusions amid an audience of madge owlets, would be at least intelligible. A full pause here comes upon me as if I had not a word more left. I will shake my brain. Once! Twice!—nothing comes up. George Fox recommends waiting on these occasions. I wait. Nothing comes. G. Fox—that sets me off again. I have finished the ‘ *Journal*,’ and 400 more pages of the ‘ *Doctrinals*,’ which I picked up for 7s. 6d. If I get on at this rate, the society will be in danger of having two Quaker poets to patronize.”

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The following letter was addressed to Mr. Procter, in acknowledgment of a miniature of Pope which he had presented to Lamb.

TO MR. PROCTER.

“ Dear Lad,—You must think me a brute beast, a rhinoceros, never to have acknowledged the receipt of your precious present. But indeed I am none of those shocking things, but have arrived at that indisposition to letter-writing, which would make it a hard exertion to write three lines to a king to spare a friend’s life. Whether it is that the Magazine paying me so much a page, I am loth to throw away composition—how much a sheet do you give your correspondents? I have hung up Pope, and a gem it is, in my town room; I hope for your approval. Though it accompanies the ‘ Essay on Man,’ I think that was not the poem he is here meditating. He would have looked up, somehow affectedly, as if he were just conceiving ‘ Awake, my St. John.’ Neither is he in the ‘ Rape of the Lock’ mood exactly. I think he has just made out the last lines of the ‘ Epistle to Jervis,’ between gay and tender,

‘ And other beauties envy Wortley’s eyes,’

“ I’ll be hanged if that isn’t the line. He is brooding over it, with a dreamy phantom of Lady Mary floating before him. He is thinking which

is the earliest possible day and hour that she will first see it. What a miniature piece of gentility it is! Why did you give it me? I do not like you enough to give you any thing so good.

“ I have dined with T. Moore and breakfasted with Rogers, since I saw you ; have much to say about them when we meet, which I trust will be in a week or two. I have been over-watched and over-poeted since Wordsworth has been in town. I was obliged for health sake to wish him gone, but now he is gone I feel a great loss. I am going to Dalston to recruit, and have serious thoughts of—altering my condition, that is, of taking to sobriety. What do you advise me ?

“ Rogers spake very kindly of you, as every body does, and none with so much reason as your

“ C. L.”

CHAPTER XIII.

[1823.]

LAMB'S CONTROVERSY WITH SOUTHEY.

IN the year 1823, Lamb appeared, for the first and only time of his life, before the public as an assailant; and the object of his attack was one of his oldest and fastest friends, Mr. Southey. It might, indeed, have been predicted of Lamb, that if ever he *did* enter the arena of personal controversy, it would be with one who had obtained a place in his affection; for no motive less powerful than the resentment of friendship which deemed itself wounded could place him in a situation so abhorrent to his habitual thoughts. Lamb had, up to this time, little reason to love reviews or reviewers; and the connexion of Southey with "The Quarterly Review," while he felt that it raised, and softened, and refined the tone of that powerful organ of a great party, sometimes vexed

him for his friend. His indignation also had been enlisted on behalf of Hazlitt and Hunt, who had been attacked in this work in a manner which he regarded as unfair; for the critics had not been content with descanting on the peculiarities in the style and taste of the one, or reprobating the political or personal vehemence of the other,—which were fair subjects of controversy,—but spoke of them with a contempt which every man of letters had a right to resent as unjust. He had been much annoyed by an allusion to himself in an article on “Hazlitt’s Political Essays,” which appeared in the *Review* for November, 1819, as “one whom we should wish to see in more respectable company;” for he felt a compliment paid him, at the expense of a friend, as a grievance far beyond any direct attack on himself. He was also exceedingly hurt by a reference made in an article on Dr. Reid’s work “*On Nervous Affections*,” which appeared in July, 1822, to an essay which he had contributed some years before to a collection of tracts published by his friend, Mr. Basil Montague, on the effect of spirituous liquors, entitled “*The Confessions of a Drunkard*.” The contribution of this paper is a striking proof of the prevalence of Lamb’s personal regards over all selfish feelings

and tastes ; for no one was less disposed than he to Montague's theory or practice of abstinence ; yet he was willing to gratify his friend by this terrible picture of the extreme effects of intemperance, of which his own occasional deviations from the right line of sobriety had given him hints and glimpses. The reviewer of Dr. Reid, adverting to this essay, speaks of it as "a fearful picture of the consequences of intemperance, which we happen to know is a true tale." How far it was from actual truth, the "Essays of Elia," the production of a later day, in which the maturity of his feeling, humour, and reason is exhibited, may sufficiently witness. These articles were not written by Mr. Southey ; but they prepared Lamb to feel acutely any attack from the Review ; and a paragraph in an article in the number for July, 1823, entitled "Progress of Infidelity," in which he recognized the hand of his old friend, gave poignancy to all the painful associations which had arisen from the same work, and concentrated them in one bitter feeling. After recording some of the confessions of unbelievers of the wretchedness which their infidelity brought on them, Mr. Southey thus proceeded :—

"Unbelievers have not always been honest

enough thus to express their real feelings ; but this we know concerning them, that when they have renounced their birthright of hope, they have not been able to divest themselves of fear. From the nature of the human mind, this might be presumed, and in fact it is so. They may deaden the heart and stupify the conscience, but they cannot destroy the imaginative faculty. There is a remarkable proof of this in ‘ Elia’s Essays,’ a book which wants only a sounder religious feeling, to be as delightful as it is original. In that upon ‘ Witches and the other Night Fears,’ he says, ‘ It is not book, or picture, or the stories of foolish servants, which create these terrors in children ; they can at most but give them a direction. Dear little T. H., who of all children has been brought up with the most scrupulous exclusion of every taint of superstition, who was never allowed to hear of goblin or apparition, or scarcely to be told of bad men, or to hear or read of any distressing story, finds all this world of fear, from which he has been so rigidly excluded *ab extra*, in his own “ thick-coming fancies,” and from his little midnight pillow this nurse-child of optimism will start at shapes, unborrowed of tradition, in sweats to which the reveries of the well-damned murderer are tranquillity.’—This poor

child, instead of being trained up in the way he should go, had been bred in the ways of modern philosophy; he had systematically been prevented from knowing any thing of that Saviour who said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven:' care had been taken that he should not pray to God, nor lie down at night in reliance upon his good providence! Nor let it be supposed that terrors of imagination belong to childhood alone. The reprobate heart, which has discarded all love of God, cannot so easily rid itself of the fear of the devil; and even when it succeeds in that also, it will then create a hell for itself. We have heard of unbelievers who thought it probable that they should be awake in their graves! and this was the opinion for which they had exchanged a Christian's hope of immortality!"

The allusion in this paragraph was really, as Lamb was afterwards convinced, intended by Mr. Southey to assist the sale of the book. In haste, having expunged some word which he thought improper, he wrote "*sounder* religious feeling," not satisfied with the epithet, but meaning to correct it in the proof, which unfortunately was never

sent him. Lamb saw it on his return from a month's pleasant holydays at Hastings, and expressed his first impression respecting it in a letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ Dear Sir,—I have just returned from Hastings, where are exquisite views and walks, and where I have given up my soul to walking, and I am now suffering sedentary contrasts. I am a long time reconciling to town after one of these excursions. Home is become strange, and will remain so yet awhile ; *home is the most unforgiving of friends, and always resents absence* ; I know its old cordial looks will return, but they are slow in clearing up. That is one of the features of this our galley-slavery, that peregrination ended makes things worse. I felt out of water (with all the sea about me) at Hastings ; and just as I had learned to domiciliate there, I must come back to find a home which is no home. I abused Hastings, but learned its value. There are spots, inland bays, &c., which realise the notions of Juan Fernandez. The best thing I lit upon by accident was a small country church, (by whom or when built unknown,) standing bare and single in the midst of a grove, with

no house or appearance of habitation within a quarter of a mile, only passages diverging from it through beautiful woods to so many farm-houses. There it stands like the first idea of a church, before parishioners were thought of, nothing but birds for its congregation; or like a hermit's oratory (the hermit dead), or a mausoleum; its effects singularly impressive, like a church found in a desert isle to startle Crusoe with a home image: you must make out a vicar and a congregation from fancy, for surely none come there; yet it wants not its pulpit, and its font, and all the seemly additaments of *our* worship.

“ Southey has attacked ‘Elia’ on the score of infidelity, in the Quarterly article, ‘Progress of Infidelity.’ He might have spared an old friend such a construction of a few careless flights, that meant no harm to religion: but I love and respect Southey, and will not retort. I hate his review, and his being a reviewer. The hint he has dropped will knock the sale of the book on the head, which was almost at a stop before. Let it stop,—there is corn in Egypt while there is cash at Leadenhall! You and I are something besides being writers, thank God!

“ Yours truly,

“ C. L.”

This feeling was a little diverted by the execution of a scheme, rather suddenly adopted, of removing to a neat cottage at Islington, where Lamb first found himself installed in the dignity of a householder. He thus describes his residence

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ 2d September, 1823.

“ Dear B. B.—What will you say to my not writing? You cannot say I do not write now. When you come Londonward, you will find me no longer in Covent Garden; I have a cottage in Colebrook Row, Islington;—a cottage, for it is detached; a white house, with six good rooms in it; the New River (rather elderly by this time) runs (if a moderate walking pace can be so termed) close to the foot of the house; and behind is a spacious garden, with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, parsnips, leeks, carrots, cabbages, to delight the heart of old Alcinous. You enter without passage into a cheerful dining-room, all studded over and rough with old books; and above is a lightsome drawing-room, three windows, full of choice prints. I feel like a great lord, never having had a house before.

“ The ‘ London,’ I fear, falls off. I linger among its creaking rafters, like the last rat; it will topple down if they don’t get some buttresses. They have pulled down three; Hazlitt, Procter, and their best stay, kind, light-hearted W——, their Janus. The best is, neither of our fortunes is concerned in it.

“ I heard of you from Mr. P—— this morning, and that gave a fillip to my laziness, which has been intolerable; but I am so taken up with pruning and gardening, quite a new sort of occupation to me. I have gathered my jargonels, but my Windsor pears are backward. The former were of exquisite raciness. I do now sit under my own vine, and contemplate the growth of vegetable nature. I can now understand in what sense they speak of *father Adam*. I recognise the paternity, while I watch my tulips. I almost feel with him too; for the first day I turned a drunken gardener (as he let in the serpent) into my Eden, and he laid about him, lopping off some choice boughs, &c. which hung over from a neighbour’s garden, and in his blind zeal laid waste a shade, which had sheltered their window from the gaze of passers by. The old gentlewoman (fury made her not handsome) could scarcely be reconciled by all my

fine words. There was no buttering her parsnips. She talked of the law. What a lapse to commit on the first day of my happy 'garden state'!

"I hope you transmitted the Fox Journal to its owner, with suitable thanks. Pray accept this for a letter, and believe me with sincere regards,

"Yours,

"C. L."

In the next letter to Barton, Lamb referred to an intended letter to Southey in the Magazine.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"September 1823.

"Dear Sir,—I have again been reading your 'Stanzas on Bloomfield,' which are the most appropriate that can be imagined,—sweet with Doric delicacy. I like that,—

'Our own more chaste Theocritus'—

just hinting at the fault of the Grecian. I love that stanza ending with,

'Words, phrases, fashions, pass away ;
But truth and nature live through all.

But I shall omit in my own copy the one stanza which alludes to Lord B. I suppose. It spoils

the sweetness and continuity of the feeling. Cannot we think of Burns, or Thomson, without sullyng the thought with a reflection out of place upon Lord Rochester? These verses might have been inscribed upon a tomb; are in fact an epitaph; satire does not look pretty upon a tomb-stone. Besides, there is a quotation in it, always bad in verse, seldom advisable in prose. I doubt if their having been in a paper will not prevent T. and H. from insertion, but I shall have a thing to send in a day or two, and shall try them. Omitting that stanza, a very little alteration is wanting in the beginning of the next. You see I use freedom. How happily (I flatter not) you have brought in his subjects; and (I suppose) his favourite measure, though I am not acquainted with any of his writings but the ‘Farmer’s Boy.’ He dined with me once, and his manners took me exceedingly.

“I rejoice that you forgive my long silence. I continue to estimate my own roof comforts highly. How could I remain all my life a lodger? My garden thrives (I am told), though I have yet reaped nothing but some tiny salads, and withered carrots. But a garden’s a garden any where, and twice a garden in London.

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“Do you go on with your ‘Quaker Sonnets?’ have ’em ready with ‘Southey’s Book of the Church.’ I meditate a letter to S. in the ‘London,’ which perhaps will meet the fate of the Sonnet.

“Excuse my brevity, for I write painfully at office, liable to a hundred callings off; and I can never sit down to an epistle elsewhere. I read or walk. If you return this letter to the Post-office, I think they will return fourpence, seeing it is but half a one. Believe me, though,

“Entirely yours,

“C. L.”

The contemplated expostulation with Southey was written, and appeared in the ‘London Magazine for October 1823.’ Lamb did not print it in any subsequent collection of his essays; but I give it now, as I have reason to know that its publication will cause no painful feelings in the mind of Mr. Southey, and as it forms the only ripple on the kindness of Lamb’s personal and literary life.

LETTER OF ELIA TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

“ Sir,—You have done me an unfriendly office, without perhaps much considering what you were doing. You have given an ill name to my poor lucubrations. In a recent paper on Infidelity, you usher in a conditional commendation of them with an exception ; which, preceding the encomium, and taking up nearly the same space with it, must impress your readers with the notion, that the objectionable parts in them are at least equal in quantity to the pardonable. The censure is in fact the criticism ; the praise—a concession merely. Exceptions usually follow, to qualify praise or blame. But there stands your reproof, in the very front of your notice, in ugly characters, like some bugbear, to frighten all good Christians from purchasing. Through you I am become an object of suspicion to preceptors of youth, and fathers of families. ‘ *A book, which wants only a sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it is original.*’ With no further explanation, what must your readers conjecture, but that my little volume is some vehicle for heresy or infidelity ? The quotation, which you honour me by subjoining, oddly enough, is of a character which bespeaks a tempe-

rament in the writer the very reverse of *that* your reproof goes to insinuate. Had you been taxing me with superstition, the passage would have been pertinent to the censure. Was it worth your while to go so far out of your way to affront the feelings of an old friend, and commit yourself by an irrelevant quotation, for the pleasure of reflecting upon a poor child, an exile at Genoa?

“I am at a loss what particular essay you had in view (if my poor ramblings amount to that appellation) when you were in such a hurry to thrust in your objection, like bad news, foremost.—Perhaps the paper on ‘Saying Graces’ was the obnoxious feature. I have endeavoured there to rescue a voluntary duty—good in place, but never, as I remember, literally commanded—from the charge of an undecent formality. Rightly taken, Sir, that paper was not against graces, but want of grace; not against the ceremony, but the carelessness and slovenliness so often observed in the performance of it.

“Or was it *that* on the ‘New Year’—in which I have described the feelings of the merely natural man, on a consideration of the amazing change, which is supposable to take place on our removal from this fleshly scene?—If men would honestly

confess their misgivings (which few men will) there are times when the strongest Christian of us, I believe, has reeled under questionings of such staggering obscurity. I do not accuse you of this weakness. There are some who tremblingly reach out shaking hands to the guidance of Faith—Others who stoutly venture into the dark (their Human Confidence their leader, whom they mistake for Faith); and, investing themselves beforehand with cherubic wings, as they fancy, find their new robes as familiar, and fitting to their supposed growth and stature in godliness, as the coat they left off yesterday—Some whose hope totters upon crutches—Others who stalk into futurity upon stilts.

“The contemplation of a Spiritual World,—which, without the addition of a misgiving conscience, is enough to shake some natures to their foundation—is smoothly got over by others, who shall float over the black billows, in their little boat of No-Distrust, as unconcernedly as over a summer sea. The difference is chiefly constitutional.

“One man shall love his friends and his friends’ faces; and, under the uncertainty of conversing with them again, in the same manner and familiar circumstances of sight, speech, &c. as upon earth—

in a moment of no irreverent weakness—for a dream-while—no more—would be almost content, for a reward of a life of virtue (if he could ascribe such acceptance to his lame performances), to take up his portion with those he loved, and was made to love, in this good world, which he knows—which was created so lovely, beyond his deservings. Another, embracing a more exalted vision—so that he might receive indefinite additaments of power, knowledge, beauty, glory, &c.—is ready to forego the recognition of humbler individualities of earth, and the old familiar faces. The shapings of our heavens are the modifications of our constitution; and Mr. Feeble Mind, or Mr. Great Heart, is born in every one of us.

“Some (and such have been accounted the safest divines) have shrunk from pronouncing upon the final state of any man; nor dare they pronounce the case of Judas to be desperate. Others (with stronger optics), as plainly as with the eye of flesh, shall behold a *given king* in bliss, and a *given chamberlain* in torment; even to the eternising of a cast of the eye in the latter, his own self-mocked and good humouredly-borne deformity on earth, but supposed to aggravate the uncouth and hideous expression of his pangs in the other

place. That one man can presume so far, and that another would with shuddering disclaim such confidences, is, I believe, an effect of the nerves purely.

“If in either of these papers, or elsewhere, I have been betrayed into some levities—not affronting the sanctuary, but glancing perhaps at some of the out-skirts and extreme edges, the debateable land between the holy and the profane regions—for the admixture of man’s inventions, twisting themselves with the name of the religion itself, has artfully made it difficult to touch even the alloy, without, in some men’s estimation, soiling the fine gold)—if I have sported within the purlieus of serious matter—it was, I dare say, a humour—be not startled, Sir—which I have unwittingly derived from yourself. You have all your life been making a jest of the Devil. Not of the scriptural meaning of that dark essence—personal or allegorical; for the nature is no where plainly delivered. I acquit you of intentional irreverence. But indeed you have made wonderfully free with, and been mighty pleasant upon, the popular idea and attributes of him. A noble Lord, your brother visionary, has scarcely taken greater liberties with the material keys, and merely Catholic notion of

St. Peter.—You have flattered him in prose : you have chanted him in goodly odes. You have been his Jester ; volunteer Laureat, and self-elected Court Poet to Beelzebub.

“ You have never ridiculed, I believe, what you thought to be religion, but you are always girding at what some pious, but perhaps mistaken folks, think to be so. For this reason I am sorry to hear, that you are engaged upon a life of George Fox. I know you will fall into the error of inter-mixing some comic stuff with your seriousness. The Quakers tremble at the subject in your hands. The Methodists are shy of you, upon account of *their* founder. But, above all, our Popish brethren are most in your debt. The errors of that church have proved a fruitful source to your scoffing vein. Their Legend has been a Golden one to you. And here your friends, sir, have noticed a notable inconsistency. To the imposing rites, the solemn penances, devout austerities of that communion ; the affecting though erring piety of their hermits ; the silence and solitude of the Chartreux—their crossings, their holy waters—their Virgin, and their saints—to these, they say, you have been indebted for the best feelings, and the richest imagery, of your Epic poetry. You have drawn

copious drafts upon Loretto. We thought at one time you were going post to Rome—but that in the facetious commentaries, which it is your custom to append so plentifully, and (some say) injudiciously, to your loftiest performances in this kind, you spurn the uplifted toe, which you but just now seemed to court; leave his holiness in the lurch; and show him a fair pair of Protestant heels under your Romish vestment. When we think you already at the wicket, suddenly a violent cross wind blows you transverse—

‘ Ten thousand leagues awry —————
 ————— Then might we see
 Cows, hoods, and habits, with their wearers, tost
 And flutter'd into rags; then reliques, beads,
 Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
 The sport of winds.’

You pick up pence by showing the hallowed bones, shrine, and crucifix; and you take money a second time by exposing the trick of them afterwards. You carry your verse to Castle Angelo for sale in a morning; and, swifter than a pedlar can transmute his pack, you are at Canterbury with your prose ware before night.

“ Sir, is it that I dislike you in this merry vein? The very reverse. No countenance becomes an intelligent jest better than your own. It is your

grave aspect, when you look awful upon your poor friends, which I would deprecate.

“In more than one place, if I mistake not, you have been pleased to compliment me at the expense of my companions. I cannot accept your compliment at such a price. The upbraiding a man’s poverty naturally makes him look about him, to see whether he be so poor indeed as he is presumed to be. You have put me upon counting my riches. Really, sir, I did not know I was so wealthy in the article of friendships. There is ——, and ——, whom you never heard of, but exemplary characters both, and excellent church-goers; and N., mine and my father’s friend for nearly half a century; and the enthusiast for Wordsworth’s poetry, ——, a little tainted with Socinianism, it is to be feared, but constant in his attachments, and a capital critic; and ——, a sturdy old Athanasian, so that sets all to rights again; and W., the light, and warm-as-light hearted, Janus of the London; and the translator of Dante, still a curate, modest and amiable C.; and Allan C., the large-hearted Scot; and P—r, candid and affectionate as his own poetry; and A—p, Coleridge’s friend; and G—n, his more than friend; and Coleridge himself, the same to

me still, as in those old evenings, when we used to sit and speculate (do you remember them, sir?) at our old Salutation tavern, upon Pantisocracy and golden days to come on earth; and W——th (why, sir, I might drop my rent-roll here; such goodly farms and manors have I reckoned up already. In what possessions has not this last name alone estated me!—but I will go on)—and M., the noble-minded kinsman, by wedlock, of W——th; and H. C. R., unwearied in the offices of a friend; and Clarkson, almost above the narrowness of that relation, yet condescending not seldom heretofore from the labours of his world-embracing charity to bless my humble roof; and the gall-less and single-minded Dyer; and the high-minded associate of Cook, the veteran colonel, with his lusty heart still sending cartels of defiance to old Time; and, not least, W. A. the last and steadiest left to me of that little knot of whist-players, that used to assemble weekly, for so many years, at the Queen's Gate (you remember them, sir?) and called Admiral Burney friend.

“I will come to the point at once. I believe you will not make many exceptions to my associates so far. But I have purposely omitted some intimacies, which I do not yet repent of having

contracted, with two gentlemen, diametrically opposed to yourself in principles. You will understand me to allude to the authors of 'Rimini' and of the 'Table Talk.' And first, of the former.—

“It is an error more particularly incident to persons of the correctest principles and habits, to seclude themselves from the rest of mankind, as from another species; and form into knots and clubs. The best people, herding thus exclusively, are in danger of contracting a narrowness. Heat and cold, dryness and moisture, in the natural world, do not fly asunder, to split the globe into sectarian parts and separations; but mingling, as they best may, correct the malignity of any single predominance. The analogy holds, I suppose, in the moral world. If all the good people were to ship themselves off to Terra Incognita, what, in humanity's name, is to become of the refuse? If the persons, whom I have chiefly in view, have not pushed matters to this extremity yet, they carry them as far as they can go. Instead of mixing with the infidel and the free-thinker—in the room of opening a negotiation, to try at least to find out at which gate the error entered—they huddle close

together, in a weak fear of infection, like that pusillanimous underling in Spenser—

‘ This is the wandering wood, this Error’s den ;
A monster vile, whom God and man does hate :
Therefore, I reed, beware. Fly, fly, quoth then
The fearful Dwarf.’

And, if they be writers in orthodox journals—addressing themselves only to the irritable passions of the unbeliever—they proceed in a safe system of strengthening the strong hands, and confirming the valiant knees ; of converting the already converted, and proselyting their own party. I am the more convinced of this from a passage in the very treatise which occasioned this letter. It is where, having recommended to the doubter the writings of Michaelis and Lardner, you ride triumphant over the necks of all infidels, sceptics, and dissenters, from this time to the world’s end, upon the wheels of two unanswerable deductions. I do not hold it meet to set down, in a miscellaneous compilation like this, such religious words as you have thought fit to introduce into the pages of a petulant literary journal. I therefore beg leave to substitute *numerals*, and refer to the ‘Quarterly Review’ (for July) for filling of them up. ‘Here,’ say you, ‘as

in the history of 7, if these books are authentic the events which they relate must be true ; if they were written by 8, 9 is 10 and 11.' Your first deduction, if it means honestly, rests upon two identical propositions ; though I suspect an unfairness in one of the terms, which this would not be quite the proper place for explicating. At all events *you* have no cause to triumph ; you have not been proving the premises, but refer for satisfaction therein to very long and laborious works, which may well employ the sceptic a twelvemonth or two to digest, before he can possibly be ripe for your conclusion. When he has satisfied himself about the premises, he will concede to you the inference, I dare say, most readily.—But your latter deduction, *viz.* that because 8 has written a book concerning 9, therefore 10 and 11 was certainly his meaning, is one of the most extraordinary conclusions *per saltum* that I have had the good fortune to meet with. As far as 10 is verbally asserted in the writings, all sects must agree with you ; but you cannot be ignorant of the many various ways in which the doctrine of the ***** has been understood, from a low figurative expression (with the Unitarians) up to the most mysterious actuality ; in which highest sense

alone you and your church take it. And for 11, and that there is *no other possible conclusion*—to hazard this in the face of so many thousands of Arians and Socinians, &c., who have drawn so opposite a one, is such a piece of theological hardihood, as, I think, warrants me in concluding that, when you sit down to pen theology, you do not at all consider your opponents; but have in your eye, merely and exclusively, readers of the same way of thinking with yourself, and therefore have no occasion to trouble yourself with the quality of the logic, to which you treat them.

“Neither can I think, if you had had the welfare of the poor child—over whose hopeless condition you whine so lamentably and (I must think) unseasonably—seriously at heart, that you could have taken the step of sticking him up *by name*—T. H. is as good as *naming* him—to perpetuate an outrage upon the parental feelings, as long as the ‘Quarterly Review’ shall last. Was it necessary to specify an individual case, and give to Christian compassion the appearance of personal attack? Is this the way to conciliate unbelievers, or not rather to widen the breach irreparably?

“I own I could never think so considerably of myself as to decline the society of an agreeable or

worthy man upon difference of opinion only. The impediments and the facilitations to a sound belief are various and inscrutable as the heart of man. Some believe upon weak principles. Others cannot feel the efficacy of the strongest. One of the most candid, most upright, and single-meaning men, I ever knew, was the late Thomas Holcroft. I believe he never said one thing and meant another, in his life ; and, as near as I can guess, he never acted otherwise than with the most scrupulous attention to conscience. Ought we to wish the character false, for the sake of a hollow compliment to Christianity ?

“ Accident introduced me to the acquaintance of Mr. L. H.—and the experience of his many friendly qualities confirmed a friendship between us. You, who have been misrepresented yourself, I should hope, have not lent an idle ear to the calumnies which have been spread abroad respecting this gentleman. I was admitted to his household for some years, and do most solemnly aver that I believe him to be in his domestic relations as correct as any man. He chose an ill-judged subject for a poem ; the peccant humours of which have been visited on him tenfold by the artful use, which his adversaries have made, of an *equivocal*

term. The subject itself was started by Dante, but better because brieflier treated of. But the crime of the lovers, in the Italian and the English poet, with its aggravated enormity of circumstance, is not of a kind (as the critics of the latter well knew) with those conjunctions, for which Nature herself has provided no excuse, because no temptation.—It has nothing in common with the black horrors, sung by Ford and Massinger. The familiarising of it in tale or fable may be for that reason incidentally more contagious. In spite of Rimini, I must look upon its author as a man of taste, and a poet. He is better than so; he is one of the most cordial-minded men I ever knew, and matchless as a fire-side companion. I mean not to affront or wound your feelings when I say that, in his more genial moods, he has often reminded me of you. There is the same air of mild dogmatism—the same condescending to a boyish sportiveness—in both your conversations. His hand-writing is so much the same with your own, that I have opened more than one letter of his, hoping, nay, not doubting, but it was from you, and have been disappointed (he will bear with my saying so) at the discovery of my error. L. H. is unfortunate in holding some loose and not very definite specu-

lations (for at times I think he hardly knows whither his premises would carry him) on marriage—the tenets, I conceive, of the ‘Political Justice’ carried a little further. For any thing I could discover in his practice, they have reference, like those, to some future possible condition of society, and not to the present times. But neither for these obliquities of thinking (upon which my own conclusions are as distant as the poles asunder)—nor for his political asperities and petulancies, which are wearing out with the heats and vanities of youth—did I select him for a friend; but for qualities which fitted him for that relation. I do not know whether I flatter myself with being the occasion, but certain it is, that, touched with some misgivings for sundry harsh things which he had written aforetime against our friend C.,—before he left this country he sought a reconciliation with that gentleman (himself being his own introducer), and found it.

“L. H. is now in Italy; on his departure to which land with much regret I took my leave of him and of his little family—seven of them, Sir, with their mother—and as kind a set of little people (T. H. and all), as affectionate children as ever blessed a parent. Had you seen them, Sir, I

think you could not have looked upon them as so many little Jonases—but rather as pledges of the vessel's safety, that was to bear such a freight of love.

“ I wish you would read Mr. H.'s lines to that same T. H. ‘six years old, during a sickness:’—

‘ Sleep breaks at last from out thee,
My little patient boy—

(they are to be found in the 47th page of ‘Foliage’)—and ask yourself how far they are out of the spirit of Christianity. I have a letter from Italy, received but the other day, into which L. H. has put as much heart, and as many friendly yearnings after old associates, and native country, as, I think, paper can well hold. It would do you no hurt to give that the perusal also.

“ From the *other gentleman* I neither expect nor desire (as he is well assured) any such concessions as L. H. made to C. What hath soured him, and made him to suspect his friends of infidelity towards him, when there was no such matter, I know not. I stood well with him for fifteen years (the proudest of my life), and have ever spoken my full mind of him to some, to whom his panegyric must naturally be least tasteful. I never in thought swerved from him, I never betrayed him, I never

slackened in my admiration of him ; I was the same to him (neither better nor worse) though he could not see it, as in the days when he thought fit to trust me. At this instant, he may be preparing for me some compliment, above my deserts, as he has sprinkled many such among his admirable books, for which I rest his debtor ; or, for any thing I know, or can guess to the contrary, he may be about to read a lecture on my weaknesses. He is welcome to them (as he was to my humble hearth), if they can divert a spleen, or ventilate a fit of sullenness. I wish he would not quarrel with the world at the rate he does ; but the reconciliation must be effected by himself, and I despair of living to see that day. But, protesting against much that he has written, and some things which he chooses to do ; judging him by his conversation which I enjoyed so long, and relished so deeply ; or by his books, in those places where no clouding passion intervenes—I should belie my own conscience, if I said less, than that I think W. H. to be, in his natural and healthy state, one of the wisest and finest spirits breathing. So far from being ashamed of that intimacy, which was betwixt us, it is my boast that I was able for so many years to have preserved it entire ; and I think I shall go

to my grave without finding, or expecting to find, such another companion. But I forget my manners—you will pardon me, Sir—I return to the correspondence.—

“Sir, you were pleased (you know where) to invite me to a compliance with the wholesome forms and doctrines of the Church of England. I take your advice with as much kindness as it was meant. But I must think the invitation rather more kind than seasonable. I am a Dissenter. The last sect, with which you can remember me to have made common profession, were the Unitarians. You would think it not very pertinent, if (fearing that all was not well with you), I were gravely to invite you (for a remedy) to attend with me a course of Mr. Belsham’s Lectures at Hackney. Perhaps I have scruples to some of your forms and doctrines. But if I come, am I secure of civil treatment?—The last time I was in any of your places of worship was on Easter Sunday last. I had the satisfaction of listening to a very sensible sermon of an argumentative turn, delivered with great propriety, by one of your bishops. The place was Westminster Abbey. As such religion, as I have, has always acted on me more by way of sentiment than argumentative process, I was not

unwilling, after sermon ended, by no unbecoming transition, to pass over to some serious feelings, impossible to be disconnected from the sight of those old tombs, &c. But, by whose order I know not, I was debarred that privilege even for so short a space as a few minutes; and turned, like a dog or some profane person, out into the common street; with feelings, which I could not help, but not very congenial to the day or the discourse. I do not know that I shall ever venture myself again into one of your Churches.

You had your education at Westminster; and, doubtless, among those dim aisles and cloisters, you must have gathered much of that devotional feeling in those young years, on which your purest mind feeds still—and may it feed! The antiquarian spirit, strong in you, and gracefully blending ever with the religious, may have been sown in you among those wrecks of splendid mortality. You owe it to the place of your education; you owe it to your learned fondness for the architecture of your ancestors; you owe it to the venerableness of your ecclesiastical establishment, which is daily lessened and called in question through these practices—to speak aloud your sense of them; never to desist raising your voice against

them, till they be totally done away with and abolished ; till the doors of Westminster Abbey be no longer closed against the decent, though low-income, enthusiast, or blameless devotee, who must commit an injury against his family economy, if he would be indulged with a bare admission within its walls. You owe it to the decencies, which you wish to see maintained in its impressive services, that our Cathedral be no longer an object of inspection to the poor at those times only, in which they must rob from their attendance on the worship every minute which they can bestow upon the fabric. In vain the public prints have taken up this subject, in vain such poor nameless writers as myself express their indignation. A word from you, sir—a hint in your journal—would be sufficient to fling open the doors of the beautiful Temple again, as we can remember them when we were boys. At that time of life, what would the imaginative faculty (such as it is) in both of us, have suffered, if the entrance to so much reflection had been obstructed by the demand of so much silver !—If we had scraped it up to gain an occasional admission (as we certainly should have done) would the sight of those old tombs have been as impressive to us (while we had been weigh-

ing anxiously prudence against sentiment) as when the gates stood open, as those of the adjacent Park ; when we could walk in at any time, as the mood brought us, for a shorter or longer time, as *that* lasted ? Is the being shown over a place the same as silently for ourselves detecting the genius of it ? In no part of our beloved Abbey now can a person find entrance (out of service time) under the sum of *two shillings*. The rich and the great will smile at the anti-climax, presumed to lie in these two short words. But you can tell them, sir, how much quiet worth, how much capacity for enlarged feeling, how much taste and genius, may co-exist, especially in youth, with a purse incompetent to this demand.—A respected friend of ours, during his late visit to the metropolis, presented himself for admission to Saint Paul's. At the same time a decently-clothed man, with as decent a wife, and child, were bargaining for the same indulgence. The price was only two-pence each person. The poor but decent man hesitated, desirous to go in : but there were three of them, and he turned away reluctantly. Perhaps he wished to have seen the tomb of Nelson. Perhaps the interior of the cathedral was his object. But in the state of his finances, even sixpence might reasonably seem too

much. Tell the aristocracy of the country (no man can do it more impressively); instruct them of what value these insignificant pieces of money, these minims to their sight, may be to their humbler brethren. Shame these sellers out of the Temple! Show the poor, that you can sometimes think of them in some other light than as mutineers and mal-contents. Conciliate them by such kind methods to their superiors, civil and ecclesiastical. Stop the mouths of the railers; and suffer your old friends, upon the old terms, again to honour and admire you. Stifle not the suggestions of your better nature with the stale evasion, that an indiscriminate admission would expose the tombs to violation. Remember your boy-days. Did you ever see, or hear, of a mob in the abbey, while it was free to all? Do the rabble come there, or trouble their heads about such speculations? It is all that you can do to drive them into your churches; they do not voluntarily offer themselves. They have, alas! no passion for antiquities; for tomb of king or prelate, sage or poet. If they had, they would no longer be the rabble.

“For forty years that I have known the fabric, the only well-attested charge of violation adduced, has been—a ridiculous dismemberment committed

upon the effigy of that amiable spy, Major André. And is it for this—the wanton mischief of some school-boy, fired perhaps with raw notions of transatlantic freedom—or the remote possibility of such a mischief occurring again, so easily to be prevented by stationing a constable within the walls, if the vergers are incompetent to the duty—is it upon such wretched pretences, that the people of England are made to pay a new Peter's pence, so long abrogated; or must content themselves with contemplating the ragged exterior of their Cathedral? The mischief was done about the time that you were a scholar there. Do you know any thing about the unfortunate relic?—can you help us in this emergency to find the nose?—or can you give Chantrey a notion (from memory) of its pristine life and vigour? I am willing for peace' sake to subscribe my guinea towards a restoration of the lamented feature.

“ I am, sir,

“ Your humble servant,

“ ELIA.”

The feeling with which this letter was received by Southey may be best described in his own words in a letter to the publisher. “ On my part

there was not even a momentary feeling of anger ; I was very much surprised and grieved, because I knew how much he would condemn himself. And yet no resentful letter was ever written less offensively : his gentle nature may be seen in it throughout." Southey was right in his belief in the revulsion Lamb's feelings would undergo, when the excitement under which he had written subsided ; for although he would retract nothing he had ever said or written in defence of his friends, he was ready at once to surrender every resentment of his own. Southey came to London in the following month, and wrote proposing to call at Islington ; and 21st of November Lamb thus replied :—

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

" E. I. H. 21st November, 1823.

" Dear Southey,—The kindness of your note has melted away the mist which was upon me. I have been fighting against a shadow. That accursed Q. R. had vexed me by a gratuitous speaking, of its own knowledge, that the 'Confessions of a D——d' was a genuine description of the state of the writer. Little things, that are not ill meant, may produce much ill. *That* might have injured me alive and dead. I am in a public office, and

my life is insured. I was prepared for anger, and I thought I saw, in a few obnoxious words, a hard case of repetition directed against me. I wish both magazine and review at the bottom of the sea. I shall be ashamed to see you, and my sister (though innocent) will be still more so; for the folly was done without her knowledge, and has made her uneasy ever since. My guardian angel was absent at that time.

“I will muster up courage to see you, however, any day next week (Wednesday excepted). We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification. She will hate to see us, but come and heap embers. We deserve it, I for what I’ve done, and she for being my sister.

“Do come early in the day, by sun-light, that you may see my *Milton*.

“I am at Colebrook-cottage, Colebrook-row, Islington. A detached whitish house, close to the New River, end of Colebrook Terrace, left hand coming from Sadlers’ Wells.

“Will you let me know the day before?

“Your penitent,

“C. LAMB.

“P.S.—I do not think your hand-writing at all like ****’s. I do not think many things I did think.”

In the following letter of the same date Lamb anticipates the meeting.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“Dear B. B.,—I am ashamed at not acknowledging your kind little poem, which I must needs like much; but I protest I thought I had done it at the moment. Is it possible a letter has miscarried? Did you get one in which I sent you an extract from the poems of Lord Sterling? I should wonder if you did, for I sent you none such. There was an incipient lie strangled in the birth. Some people’s conscience is so tender! But, in plain truth, I thank you very much for the verses. I have a very kind letter from the Laureat, with a self-invitation to come and shake hands with me. This is truly handsome and noble. ’Tis worthy of my old ideas of Southey. Shall not I, think you, be covered with a red suffusion?

“You are too much apprehensive of your complaint: I know many that are always ailing of it, and live on to a good old age. I know a merry fellow (you partly know him) who, when his medical adviser told him he had drunk away all *that part*, congratulated himself (now his liver was gone) that he should be the longest liver of the two.

“The best way in these cases is to keep yourself as ignorant as you can, as ignorant as the world was before Galen, of the entire inner constructions of the animal man; not to be conscious of a midriff; to hold kidneys (save those of sheep and swine) to be an agreeable fiction; not to know whereabouts the gall grows; to account the circulation of the blood a mere idle whim of Harvey’s; to acknowledge no mechanism not visible. For once fix the seat of your disorder, and your fancies flux into it like so many bad humours. Those medical gentry choose each his favourite part; one takes the lungs, another the aforesaid liver, and refers to that, whatever in the animal economy is amiss. Above all, use exercise, take a little more spirituous liquors, learn to smoke, continue to keep a good conscience, and avoid tamperings with hard terms of art — viscosity, scirrhusity, and those bug-bears by which simple patients are scared into their graves. Believe the general sense of the mercantile world, which holds that desks are not deadly. It is the mind, good B. B., and not the limbs, that taints by long sitting. Think of the patience of tailors, think how long the Lord Chancellor sits, think of the brooding hen! I protest I cannot answer thy sister’s kind

enquiry; but, I judge I shall put forth no second volume. More praise than buy; and T. and H. are not particularly disposed for martyrs. Thou wilt see a funny passage, and yet a true history, of George Dyer's aquatic incursion in the next 'London.' Beware his fate, when thou comest to see me at my Colebrook Cottage. I have filled my little space with my little thoughts. I wish thee ease on thy sofa; but not too much indulgence on it. From my poor desk, thy fellow sufferer, this bright November,

“C. L.”

Southey went to Colebrook-cottage, as proposed; the awkwardness of meeting went off in a moment; and the affectionate intimacy, which had lasted for almost twenty years, was renewed, to be interrupted only by death.

CHAPTER XIX.

[1823 to 1825.]

LETTERS TO AINSWORTH, BARTON, AND
COLERIDGE.

LAMB was fond of visiting the Universities in the summer vacation, and repeatedly spent his holiday month at Cambridge with his sister. On one of these occasions they met with a little girl, who being in a manner alone in the world, engaged their sympathy, and soon riveted their affections. Emma Isola was the daughter of Mr. Charles Isola, who had been one of the esquire bedells of the University; her grandfather, Agostino Isola, had been compelled to fly from Milan, because a friend took up an English book in his apartment, which he had carelessly left in view. This good old man numbered among his pupils, Gray the poet, Mr. Pitt, and, in his old age, Wordsworth, whom he

instructed in the Italian language. His little granddaughter, at the time when she had the good fortune to win the regard of Mr. Lamb, had lost both her parents, and was spending her holidays with an aunt, who lived with a sister of Mr. Ayrton, at whose house Lamb generally played his evening rubber during his stay at Cambridge. The liking which both Lamb and his sister took for the little orphan, led to their begging her of her aunt for the next holidays; their regard for her increased; she regularly spent the holidays with them till she left school, and afterwards was adopted as a daughter, and lived generally with them until 1833, when she married Mr. Moxon. Lamb was fond of taking long walks in the country, and as Miss Lamb's strength was not always equal to these pedestrian excursions, she became his constant companion in walks which even extended "to the green fields of pleasant Hertfordshire."

About this time, Lamb added to his list of friends, Mr. Hood, the delightful humourist; Hone, lifted for a short time into political fame by the prosecution of his Parodies, and the signal energy and success of his defence, but now striving by unwearied researches, which were

guided by a pure taste and an honest heart, to support a numerous family ; and Ainsworth, then a youth, who has since acquired so splendid a reputation as the author of “Rookwood” and “Crichton.” Mr. Ainsworth, then resident at Manchester, excited by an enthusiastic admiration of Elia, had sent him some books, for which he thus conveyed his thanks to his unseen friend.

TO MR. AINSWORTH.

“ India House, 9th Dec. 1823.

“ Dear sir,—I should have thanked you for your books and compliments sooner, but have been waiting for a revise to be sent, which does not come, though I returned the proof on the receipt of your letter. I have read Warner with great pleasure. What an elaborate piece of alliteration and antithesis ! why it must have been a labour far above the most difficult versification. There is a fine simile or picture of Semiramis arming to repel a siege. I do not mean to keep the book, for I suspect you are forming a curious collection, and I do not pretend to any thing of the kind. I have not a black-letter book among mine, old Chaucer excepted, and am not bibliomanist enough

to like black letter. It is painful to read; therefore I must insist on returning it at opportunity, not from contumacy and reluctance to be obliged, but because it must suit you better than me. The loss of a present *from* should never exceed the gain of a present *to*. I hold this maxim infallible in the accepting line. I read your magazines with satisfaction. I thoroughly agree with you as to ‘The German Faust,’ as far as I can do justice to it from an English translation. ’Tis a disagreeable canting tale of seduction, which has nothing to do with the spirit of Faustus—Curiosity. Was the dark secret to be explored, to end in the seducing of a weak girl, which might have been accomplished by earthly agency? When Marlow gives *his* Faustus a mistress, he flies him at Helen, flower of Greece, to be sure, and not at Miss Betsy, or Miss Sally Thoughtless.

‘Cut is the branch that bore the goodly fruit,
And wither’d is Apollo’s laurel tree :
Faustus is dead.’

“What a noble natural transition from metaphor to plain speaking! as if the figurative had flagged in description of such a loss, and was reduced to tell the fact simply.

“ I must now thank you for your very kind invitation. It is not out of prospect that I may see Manchester some day, and then I will avail myself of your kindness. But holidays are scarce things with me, and the laws of attendance are getting stronger and stronger at Leadenhall. But I shall bear it in mind. Meantime, something may (more probably) bring you to town, where I shall be happy to see you. I am always to be found (alas !) at my desk in the forepart of the day.

“ I wonder why they do not send the revise. I leave late at office, and my abode lies out of the way, or I should have seen about it. If you are impatient, perhaps a line to the printer, directing him to send it me, at Accountant’s Office, may answer. You will see by the scrawl that I only snatch a few minutes from intermitting business.

“ Your obliged servant,

“ C. LAMB.

“ (If I had time I would go over this letter again, and dot all my i’s.)”

To Ainsworth, still pressing him to visit Manchester, he sent the following reply.

TO MR. AINSWORTH.

“ My dear sir,—You talk of months at a time, and I know not what inducements to visit Manchester, Heaven knows how gratifying ! but I have had my little month of 1823 already. It is all over, and without incurring a disagreeable favour, I cannot so much as get a single holiday till the season returns with the next year. Even our half-hour’s absences from office are set down in a book ! Next year, if I can spare a day or two of it, I will come to Manchester, but I have reasons at home against longer absences.

“ I am so ill just at present—(an illness of my own procuring last night; who is perfect?)—that nothing but your very great kindness could make me write. I will bear in mind the letter to W. W., and you shall have it quite in time, before the 12th.

“ My aching and confused head warns me to leave off. With a muddled sense of gratefulness, which I shall apprehend more clearly to-morrow,

“ I remain, your friend unseen,

“ C. L.

“ I. II. 29th.

“ Will your occasions or inclination bring you

to London? It will give me great pleasure to show you every thing that Islington can boast, if you know the meaning of that Cockney sound. We have the New River! I am ashamed of this scrawl, but I beg you to accept it for the present. I am full of qualms.

‘ A fool at fifty is a fool indeed.’ ”

Bernard Barton still frequently wrote to him; and he did not withhold the wished-for reply even when letter-writing was a burthen. The following gives a ludicrous account of his indisposition:—

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ Dear B. B.—Do you know what it is to succumb under an insurmountable day-mare,—‘ a whoreson lethargy,’ Falstaff calls it,—an indisposition to do any thing, or to be any thing,—a total deadness and distaste,—a suspension of vitality,—an indifference to locality,—a numb, soporifical, good-for-nothingness,—an ossification all over,—an oyster-like insensibility to the passing events,—a mind-stupor,—a brawny defiance to the needles of a thrusting-in conscience? Did you ever have a very bad cold, with a total irresolution to submit

to water-gruel processes? This has been for many weeks my lot, and my excuse; my fingers drag heavily over this paper, and to my thinking it's three-and-twenty furlongs from hence to the end of this demi-sheet. I have not a thing to say; nothing is of more importance than another; I am flatter than a denial or a pancake; emptier than Judge ——'s wig when the head is in it; duller than a country stage when the actors are off it; a cipher, an 0! I acknowledge life at all, only by an occasional convulsional cough, and a permanent phlegmatic pain in the chest. I am weary of the world, and the world is weary of me. My day is gone into twilight, and I don't think it worth the expense of candles. My wick hath a thief in it, but I can't muster courage to snuff it. I inhale suffocation; I can't distinguish veal from mutton; nothing interests me. 'Tis twelve o'clock, and Thurtell is just now coming out upon the New Drop, Jack Ketch alertly tucking up his greasy sleeves to do the last office of mortality, yet cannot I elicit a groan or a moral reflection. If you told me the world will be at an end to-morrow, I should just say, 'will it?' I have not volition enough left to dot my *i*'s, much less to comb my eyebrows; my eyes are set in my head; my brains are gone

out to see a poor relation in Moorfields, and they did not say when they'd come back again; my skull is a Grub-street attic to let—not so much as a joint-stool left in it; my hand writes, not I; just as chickens run about a little, when their heads are off. O for a vigorous fit of gout, of cholic, toothache,—an earwig in my auditory, a fly in my visual organs; pain is life—the sharper, the more evidence of life; but this apathy, this death! Did you ever have an obstinate cold,—a six or seven weeks' unintermitting chill and suspension of hope, fear, conscience, and every thing? Yet do I try all I can to cure it; I try wine, and spirits, and smoking, and snuff in unsparing quantities, but they all only seem to make me worse instead of better. I sleep in a damp room, but it does me no good; I come home late o' nights, but do not find any visible amendment!

“ It is just fifteen minutes after twelve; Thurtell is by this time a good way on his journey, baiting at Scorpion perhaps; Ketch is bargaining for his cast coat and waistcoat; the Jew demurs at first at three half-crowns, but, on consideration that he may get somewhat by showing 'em in the town, finally closes.

“ C. L.”

Barton took this letter rather too seriously, and Lamb thus sought to remove his friendly anxieties.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ My dear Sir,—That peevish letter of mine, which was meant to convey an apology for my incapacity to write, seems to have been taken by you in too serious a light; it was only my way of telling you I had a severe cold. The fact is, I have been insuperably dull and lethargic for many weeks, and cannot rise to the vigour of a letter, much less an essay. The ‘ London ’ must do without me for a time, for I have lost all interest about it; and whether I shall recover it or not, I know not. I will bridle my pen another time, and not tease and puzzle you with my oddities. I shall begin to feel a little more alive with the spring. Winter is to me (mild or harsh) always a great trial of the spirits. I am ashamed not to have noticed your tribute to Woolman, whom we both love so much. It is done in your good manner. Your friend Taylor called on me some time since, and seems a very amiable man. His last story is painfully fine. His book I ‘ like ; ’ it is only too stuff’d with scripture, too parsonish. The best

thing in it is the boy's own story. When I say it is too full of scripture, I mean it is too full of *direct quotations* : no book can have too much of silent scripture in it; but the natural power of a story is diminished when the uppermost purpose of the writer seems to be to recommend something else. You know what Horace says of the *Deus intersit* ? I am not able to explain myself,—you must do it for me. My sister's part in the 'Leicester School' (about two-thirds) was purely her own; as it was (to the same quantity) in the 'Shakspeare Tales' which bears my name. I wrote only the 'Witch Aunt;' the 'First going to Church;' and the final story, about 'A little Indian girl,' in a ship. Your account of my black-balling amused me. *I think, as Quakers they did right.* There are many things in my little book hard to be understood. The more I think, the more I am vexed at having puzzled you with that letter; but I have been so out of letter-writing lately, that it is a sore effort to sit down to it; and I felt in your debt, and sat down waywardly to pay you in bad money. Never mind my dulness; I am used to long intervals of it. The heavens seem brass to me; then again comes the refreshing shower—

‘I have been merry once or twice ere now.’

“ You said something about Mr. M—— in a late letter, which I believe I did not advert to. I shall be happy to show him my Milton (it is all the show things I have) at any time he will take the trouble of a jaunt to Islington. I do also hope to see Mr. Taylor there some day. Pray say so to both. Coleridge’s book is in good part printed, but sticks a little for *more copy*. It bears an unsaleable title, ‘ Extracts from Bishop Leighton,’ but I am confident there will be plenty of good notes in it. * * *

“ Keep your good spirits up, dear B. B., mine will return: they are at present in abeyance; but I am rather lethargic than miserable. I don’t know but a good horsewhip would be more beneficial to me than physic. My head, without aching, will teach yours to ache. It is well I am getting to the conclusion. I will send a better letter when I am a better man. Let me thank you for your kind concern for me, (which I trust will have reason soon to be dissipated,) and assure you that it gives me pleasure to hear from you.

“ Yours truly,

“ C. L.”

The following sufficiently indicate the circumstances under which they were written:—

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ February, 1824.

“ My dear Sir,—Your title of ‘Poetic Vigils’ arrides me much more than a volume of verse, which has no meaning. The motto says nothing, but I cannot suggest a better. I do not like mottoes, but when they are singularly felicitous; there is a foppery in them; they are un-plain, un-Quakerish; they are good only where they flow from the title, and are a kind of justification of it. There is nothing about watchings or lucubrations in the one you suggest, no commentary on vigils. By the way, a wag would recommend you to the line of Pope,

‘ Sleepless himself—to give his readers sleep,’—

I by no means wish it; but it may explain what I mean,—that a neat motto is child of the title. I think ‘Poetic Vigils’ as short and sweet as can be desired; only have an eye on the proof, that the printer do not substitute *Virgils*, which would ill accord with your modesty or meaning. Your suggested motto is antique enough in spelling, and modern enough in phrases,—a good modern antique; but the matter of it is german to the purpose, only supposing the title proposed a vindica-

tion of yourself from the presumption of authorship. The first title was liable to this objection—that if you were disposed to change it, and the bookseller insisted on its appearance in two tomes, how oddly it would sound, ‘A Volume of Verse in two Volumes, Second Edition,’ &c. You see this my wicked intention of curtailing this epistolet by the above device of large margin. But in truth the idea of letterising has been oppressive to me of late, above what your candour gives me credit for. There is Southey, whom I ought to have thanked a fortnight ago for a present of the ‘Church Book:’ I have never had courage to buckle myself in earnest even to acknowledge it; and yet I am accounted by some people a good man! How cheap that character is acquired! Pay your debts, don’t borrow money, nor twist your kitten’s neck off, nor disturb a congregation, &c., your business is done. I know things (for thoughts *are* things) of myself, which would make every friend I have fly me as a plague patient. I once set a dog upon a crab’s leg that was shoved out under a mass of sea-weeds,—a pretty little feeler! Oh! pah! how sick I am of that! And a lie, a mean one, I once told. I stink in the midst of respect. I am much lypt. The fact is, my head is heavy, but

there is hope ; or if not, I am better than a poor shell-fish ; not morally, when I set the whelp upon it, but have more blood and spirits. Things may turn up, and I may creep again into a decent opinion of myself. Vanity will return with sunshine. Till when, pardon my neglects, and impute it to the wintry solstice.

“ C. LAMB.”

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ Dear B. B.,—I am sure I cannot fill a letter, though I should disfurnish my scull to do it ; but you expect something and shall have a notelet. Is Sunday, not divinely speaking, but humanly and holidaysically, a blessing ? Without its institution, would our rugged taskmasters have given us a leisure day, so often, think you, as once in a month ? or, if it had not been instituted, might not they have given us every sixth day ? Solve me this problem :—If we are to go three times a day to church, why has Sunday slipt into the notion of a *holiday* ? A HOLY-day I grant it. The Puritans, I have read in Southey’s book, knew the distinction. They made people observe Sunday rigorously, would not let a nursery-

maid walk out in the fields with children for recreation on that day. But *then*—they gave the people a holiday from all sorts of work every second Tuesday. This was giving to the two Cæsars that which was *his* respective. Wise, beautiful, thoughtful, generous legislators ! Would Wilberforce give us our Tuesdays ? No !—he would turn the six days into sevenths,

‘ And those three smiling seasons of the year
Into a Russian winter.’

Old Play.

“ I am sitting opposite a person who is making strange distortions with the gout, which is not unpleasant—to me at least. What is the reason we do not sympathize with pain, short of some terrible surgical operation ? Hazlitt, who boldly says all he feels, avows that he not only does not pity sick people, but he hates them. I obscurely recognise his meaning. Pain is probably too selfish a consideration, too simply a consideration of self attention. We pity poverty, loss of friends, &c.—more complex things, in which the sufferer’s feelings are associated with others. This is a rough thought suggested by the presence of gout ; I want head to extricate and plane it. What is all this to your letter ? I felt it to be a good

one, but my turn when I write at all, is perversely to travel out of the record, so that my letters are any thing but answers. So you still want a motto? You must not take my ironical one, because your book, I take it, is too serious for it. Bickerstaff might have used it for *his* lucubrations. What do you think of Religio-Tremuli? or Tremebundi? (for a title.) There is Religio-Medici, and Religio-Laici. But perhaps the volume is not quite Quakerish enough, or exclusively so, for it. Your own 'Vigils' is perhaps the best. While I have space let me congratulate you on the return of spring, what a summer spring too! all those qualms about the dog and cray-fish melt before it. I am going to be happy and *vain* again.

"A hasty farewell.

"C. LAMB."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"July 7th, 1824.

"Dear B. B.,—I have been suffering under a severe inflammation of the eyes, notwithstanding which I resolutely went through your very pretty volume at once, which I dare pronounce in no ways inferior to former lucubrations. 'Abroad'

and ‘*lord*’ are vile rhymes notwithstanding, and if you count you will wonder how many times you have repeated the word *unearthly*; thrice in one poem. It is become a slang word with the bards; avoid in future lustily. ‘Time’ is fine, but there are better a good deal, I think. The volume does not lie by me; and, after a long day’s smarting fatigue, which has almost put out my eyes (not blind however to your merits), I dare not trust myself with long writing. The verses to Bloomfield are the sweetest in the collection. Religion is sometimes lugged in, as if it did not come naturally. I will go over carefully when I get my seeing, and exemplify. You have also too much of singing metre, such as requires no deep ear to make; lilting measure, in which you have done Woolman injustice. Strike at less superficial melodies. The piece on Nayler is more to my fancy.

“My eye runs waters. But I will give you a fuller account some day. The book is a very pretty one in more than one sense. The decorative harp, perhaps, too ostentatious; a simple pipe preferable.

“Farewell, and many thanks.

“C. LAMB.”

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ August, 1824.

“ Dear B. B.—The ‘Prometheus,’ *unbound*, is a capital story. The literary rogue! What if you had ordered ‘Elfrida,’ in *sheets*! she’d have been sent up, I warrant you. Or bid him clasp his Bible (*i. e.* to his bosom), he’d have clapt on a brass clasp, no doubt.

“ I can no more understand Shelley than you can. His poetry is ‘thin sown with profit or delight.’ Yet I must point to your notice, a poem conceived and expressed with a witty delicacy. It is that addressed to one who hated him, but who could not persuade him to hate *him* again. His coyness to the other’s passion—(for hatred demands a return as much as love, and starves without it)—is most arch and pleasant. Pray like it very much. For his theories and nostrums, they are oracular enough, but I either comprehend ’em not, or there is ‘miching malice’ and mischief in ’em, but, for the most part, ringing with their own emptiness. Hazlitt said well of ’em—‘Many are the wiser and better for reading Shakspeare, but nobody was ever wiser or better for reading Shelley.’ I wonder you will sow your correspondence

on so barren a ground as I am, that make such poor returns. But my head aches at the bare prospect of letter-writing. I wish all the ink in the ocean dried up, and would listen to the quills shivering up in the candle flame, like parching martyrs. The same indisposition to write has stopt my 'Elias,' but you will see a futile effort in the next number, 'wrung from me with slow pain.' I am dreadfully indolent. To have to do any thing, to order a new coat, for instance, though my old buttons are shelled like beans, is an effort. My pen stammers like my tongue. What cool heads those old inditers of folios must have had ! what a mortified pulse ! Well ; once more I throw myself on your mercy. Wishing peace to thy new dwelling,

“ C. LAMB.”

Mr. Barton, having requested of Lamb some verses for his daughter's album, received the following with the accompanying letter beneath, on 30th November in this year. Surely the neat loveliness of female quakerism never received before so delicate a compliment !

"THE ALBUM OF LUCY BARTON.

Little book, surnam'd of *white*,
Clean as yet, and fair to sight,
Keep thy attribution right.

Never disproportion'd scrawl ;
Ugly, old, (that 's worse than all)
On thy maiden clearness fall !

In each letter here design'd,
Let the reader emblem'd find
Neatness of the owner's mind.

Gilded margins count a sin ;
Let thy leaves attraction win
By the golden rules within ;

Sayings fetched from sages old ;
Laws which Holy Writ unfold,
Worthy to be grav'd in gold :

Lighter fancies ; not excluding
Blameless wit, with nothing rude in,
Sometimes mildly interluding

Amid strains of graver measure :
Virtue's self hath oft her pleasure
In sweet Muses' groves of leisure.

Riddles dark, perplexing sense ;
Darker meanings of offence ;
What but *shades*—be banish'd hence !

Whitest thoughts, in whitest dress,
Candid meanings best express
Mind of quiet Quakeress."

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“Dear B. B.,—‘I am ill at these numbers;’ but, if the above be not too mean to have a place in thy daughter’s sanctum, take them with pleasure.

“I began on another sheet of paper, and just as I had penned the second line of stanza two, an ugly blot fell, to illustrate my counsel. I am sadly given to blot, and modern blotting-paper gives no redress; it only smears, and makes it worse. The only remedy is scratching out, which gives it a clerkish look. The most innocent blots are made with red ink, and are rather ornamental. Marry, they are not always to be distinguished from the effusions of a cut finger! Well, I hope and trust thy *tick doleru*, or, however you spell it, is vanished, for I have frightful impressions of that tick, and do altogether hate it, as an unpaid score, or the tick of a death watch. I take it to be a species of Vitus’s dance, (I omit the sanctity, writing to one of the men called friends). I knew a young lady who could dance no other; she danced it through life, and very queer and fantastic were her steps.

“Heaven bless thee from such measures, and

keep thee from the foul fiend, who delights to lead after false fires in the night, Flibbertigibbet, that gives the web, and I forget what else.

“ From my den, as Bunyan has it.

“ C. L.”

Here is a humorous expostulation with Coleridge for carrying away a book from the cottage, in the absence of its inmates.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

“ Dear C.,—Why will you make your visits, which should give pleasure, matter of regret to your friends? you never come but you take away some folio, that is part of my existence. With a great deal of difficulty I was made to comprehend the extent of my loss. My maid, Becky, brought me a dirty bit of paper, which contained her description of some book which Mr. Coleridge had taken away. It was ‘Luster’s Tables,’ which, for some time, I could not make out. ‘What! has he carried away any of the *tables*, Becky?’ ‘No, it wasn’t any tables, but it was a book that he called Luster’s ‘Tables.’ I was obliged to search personally among my shelves, and a huge fissure

suddenly disclosed to me the true nature of the damage I had sustained. That book, C., you should not have taken away, for it is not mine, it is the property of a friend, who does not know its value, nor indeed have I been very sedulous in explaining to him the estimate of it; but was rather contented in giving a sort of corroboration to a hint that he let fall, as to its being suspected to be not genuine, so that in all probability it would have fallen to me as a deodand, not but I am as sure it is Luther's, as I am sure that Jack Bunyan wrote the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' but it was not for me to pronounce upon the validity of testimony that had been disputed by learned clerks than I, so I quietly let it occupy the place it had usurped upon my shelves, and should never have thought of issuing an ejectment against it; for why should I be so bigoted as to allow rites of hospitality to none but my own books, children, &c.?—a species of egotism I abhor from my heart. No; let 'em all snug together, Hebrews and Proselytes of the gate; no selfish partiality of mine shall make distinction between them; I charge no warehouse-room for my friends' commodities; they are welcome to come and stay as long as they like, without paying rent. I have several such strangers

that I treat with more than Arabian courtesy; there's a copy of More's fine poem, which is none of mine, but I cherish it as my own; I am none of those churlish landlords that advertise the goods to be taken away in ten days' time, or then to be sold to pay expenses. So you see I had no right to lend you that book; I may lend you my own books, because it is at my own hazard, but it is not honest to hazard a friend's property; I always make that distinction. I hope you will bring it with you, or send it by Hartley; or he can bring that, and you the 'Polemical Discourses,' and come and eat some atoning mutton with us one of these days shortly. We are engaged two or three Sundays deep, but always dine at home on week days at half-past four. So come all four—men and books I mean—my third shelf (northern compartment) from the top has two devilish gaps, where you have knock'd out its two eye-teeth.

“Your wronged friend,

“C. LAMB.”

The following preface to a letter, addressed to Miss Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, playing on the pretended defects of Miss Lamb's handwriting, is one of those artifices of affection which,

not finding scope in eulogistic epithets, takes refuge in apparent abuse. Lamb himself, at this time, wrote a singularly neat hand, having greatly improved in the India House, where he also learned to flourish,—a facility he took a pride in, and sometimes indulged; but his flourishes (wherefore it would be too curious to inquire) almost always shaped themselves into a visionary corkscrew, ‘never made to draw.’

TO MISS HUTCHINSON.

“Dear Miss H.,—Mary has such an invincible reluctance to any epistolary exertion, that I am sparing her a mortification by taking the pen from her. The plain truth is, she writes such a pimping, mean, detestable hand, that she is ashamed of the formation of her letters. There is an essential poverty and abjectness in the frame of them. They look like begging letters. And then she is sure to omit a most substantial word in the second draught (for she never ventures an epistle without a foul copy first), which is obliged to be interlined; which spoils the neatest epistle, you know. Her figures, 1, 2, 3, 4, &c., where she has occasion to express numerals, as in the date [25th March 1824], are not figures, but figurantes; and the

combined posse go staggering up and down shameless, as drunkards in the day time. It is no better when she rules her paper. Her lines 'are not less erring' than her words. A sort of unnatural parallel lines, that are perpetually threatening to meet; which, you know, is quite contrary to Euclid. Her very blots are not bold like this, [here a large blot is inserted], but poor smears, half left in and half scratched out, with another smear left in their place. I like a clear letter. A bold free hand, and a fearless flourish. Then she has always to go through them (a second operation) to dot her *i*'s, and cross her *t*'s. I don't think she can make a corkscrew if she tried, which has such a fine effect at the end or middle of an epistle, and fills up.

"There is a corkscrew! One of the best I ever drew. By the way, what incomparable whisky that was of M.'s! But if I am to write a letter, let me begin, and not stand flourishing, like a fencer at a fair.

"It gives me great pleasure," &c. &c. &c.

[The letter now begins.]

What a strange mingling of humour and solemn truth is there in the following reflection on Fauntleroy's fate, in a letter addressed to Bernard Barton!

TO BERNARD BARTON.

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“ And now, my dear sir, trifling apart, the gloomy catastrophe of yesterday morning prompts a sadder vein. The fate of the unfortunate Fauntleroy makes me, whether I will or no, to cast reflecting eyes around on such of my friends as, by a parity of situation, are exposed to a similarity of temptation. My very style seems to myself to become more impressive than usual, with the charge of them. Who that standeth, knoweth but he may yet fall? Your hands as yet, I am most willing to believe, have never deviated into other's property. You think it impossible that you could ever commit so heinous an offence ; but so thought Fauntleroy once ; so have thought many besides him, who at last have expiated as he hath done. You are as yet upright ; but you are a banker, or at least the next thing to it. I feel the delicacy of the subject ; but cash must pass through your hands, sometimes to a great amount. If in an unguarded hour———but I will hope better. Consider the scandal it will bring upon those of your persuasion. Thousands would go to see a Quaker hanged, that would be indifferent to the

fate of a Presbyterian or an Anabaptist. Think of the effect it would have on the sale of your poems alone, not to mention higher considerations! I tremble, I am sure, at myself, when I think that so many poor victims of the law, at one time of their life, made as sure of never being hanged, as I, in my own presumption, am ready, too ready, to do myself. What are we better than they? Do we come into the world with different necks? Is there any distinctive mark under our left ears? Are we unstrangulable, I ask you? Think on these things. I am shocked sometimes at the shape of my own fingers, not for their resemblance to the ape tribe (which is something), but for the exquisite adaptation of them to the purposes of picking, fingering, &c.

“No one that is so framed, I maintain it, but should tremble.

“C. L.”

In the year 1824, one of Lamb's last ties to the theatre, as a scene of present enjoyment, was severed. Munden, the rich peculiarities of whose acting he has embalmed in one of the choicest “Essays of Elia,” quitted the stage in the mellowness of his powers. His relish for Munden's

acting was almost a new sense: he did not compare him with the old comedians, as having common qualities with them, but regarded him as altogether of a different and original style. On the last night of his appearance, Lamb was very desirous to attend, but every place in the boxes had long been secured; and Lamb was not strong enough to stand the tremendous rush, by enduring which, alone, he could hope to obtain a place in the pit; when Munden's gratitude for his exquisite praise anticipated his wish, by providing for him and Miss Lamb places in a corner of the orchestra, close to the stage. The play of the "Poor Gentleman," in which Munden played "Sir Robert Bramble," had concluded, and the audience were impatiently waiting for the farce, in which the great comedian was to delight them for the last time, when my attention was suddenly called to Lamb by Miss Kelly, who sat with my party far withdrawn into the obscurity of one of the Upper Boxes, but overlooking the radiant hollow which waved below us, to our friend. In his hand, directly beneath the line of stage lights, glistened a huge porter pot, which he was draining; while the broad face of old Munden was seen thrust out from the door by which the musicians enter, watch-

ing the close of the draught, when he might receive and hide the portentous beaker from the gaze of the admiring neighbours. Some unknown benefactor had sent four pots of stout to keep up the veteran's heart during his last trial; and, not able to drink them all, he bethought him of Lamb, and without considering the wonder which would be excited in the brilliant crowd who surrounded him, conveyed himself the cordial chalice to Lamb's parched lips. At the end of the same farce, Munden found himself unable to deliver from memory a short and elegant address which one of his sons had written for him; but, provided against accidents, took it from his pocket, wiped his eyes, put on his spectacles, read it, and made his last bow. This was, perhaps, the last night when Lamb took a hearty interest in the present business scene; for though he went now and then to the theatre to gratify Miss Isola, or to please an author who was his friend, his real stage henceforth only spread itself out in the selectest chambers of his memory.

CHAPTER XV.

[1825.]

LAMB'S EMANCIPATION FROM THE INDIA-HOUSE.

THE year 1825 is marked by one of the principal events in Lamb's uneventful life—his retirement from the drudgery of the desk, with a pension equal to two-thirds of his now liberal salary. The following letters vividly exhibit his hopes and his apprehensions before he received this noble boon from the East-India Company, and his bewilderment of pleasure when he found himself in reality free. He has recorded his feelings in one of the most beautiful of his "Last Essays of Elia," entitled "The Superannuated Man;" but it will be interesting to contemplate them, "living as they rose," in the unstudied letters to which this chapter is devoted.

A New Series of the London Magazine was

commenced with this year, in an increased size and price; but the spirit of the work had evaporated, as often happens to periodical works, as the store of rich fancies with which its contributors had begun, was in a measure exhausted. Lamb contributed a “Memoir of Liston,” who occasionally enlivened Lamb’s evening parties with his society; and who, besides the interest which he derived from his theatrical fame, was recommended to Lamb by the cordial admiration he expressed for Munden, whom he used to imitate in a style delightfully blending his own humour with that of his sometime rival. The “Memoir” is altogether a fiction—of which, as Lamb did not think it worthy of republication, I will only give a specimen. After a ludicrously improbable account of his hero’s pedigree, birth, and early habits, Lamb thus represents his entrance on the life of an actor.

“We accordingly find him shortly after making his *début*, as it is called, upon the Norwich boards, in the season of that year, being then in the 22d year of his age. Having a natural bent to tragedy, he chose the part of ‘Pyrrhus,’ in the ‘Distressed Mother,’ to Sally Parker’s ‘Hermione.’ We find him afterwards as ‘Barnwell,’ ‘Altamont,’

‘Chamont,’ &c.; but, as if nature had destined him to the sock, an unavoidable infirmity absolutely discapacitated him for tragedy. His person at this latter period of which I have been speaking, was graceful, and even commanding; his countenance set to gravity; he had the power of arresting the attention of an audience at first sight almost beyond any other tragic actor. But he could not hold it. To understand this obstacle, we must go back a few years, to those appalling reveries at Charnwood. Those illusions, which had vanished before the dissipation of a less recluse life, and more free society, now in his solitary tragic studies, and amid the intense calls upon feeling incident to tragic acting, came back upon him with tenfold vividness. In the midst of some most pathetic passage—the parting of Jaffier with his dying friend, for instance—he would suddenly be surprised with a fit of violent horse laughter. While the spectators were all sobbing before him with emotion, suddenly one of those grotesque faces would peep out upon him, and he could not resist the impulse. A timely excuse once or twice served his purpose, but no audiences could be expected to bear repeatedly this violation of the continuity of feeling. He describes them (the illu-

sions) as so many demons haunting him, and paralysing every effort. Even now, I am told, he cannot recite the famous soliloquy in Hamlet, even in private, without immoderate bursts of laughter. However, what he had not force of reason sufficient to overcome, he had good sense enough to turn to emolument, and determined to make a commodity of his distemper. He prudently exchanged the buskin for the sock, and the illusions instantly ceased; or, if they occurred for a short season, by their very co-operation, added a zest to his comic vein; some of his most catching faces being (as he expresses it) little more than transcripts and copies of those extraordinary phantasmata."

He completed his half century on the day when he addressed the following letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

" 10th February 1825.

" Dear B. B.,—The ' Spirit of the Age ' is by Hazlitt, the characters of Coleridge, &c. he had done better in former publications, the praise and the abuse much stronger, &c., but the new ones are capitally done. Horne Tooke is a matchless

portrait. My advice is, to borrow it rather than buy it. I have it; he has laid too many colours on my likeness; but I have had so much injustice done me in my own name, that I make a rule of accepting as much over-measure to Elia as gentlemen think proper to bestow. Lay it on, and spare not. Your gentleman brother sets my mouth watering after liberty. Oh that I were kicked out of Leadenhall with every mark of indignity, and a competence in my fob. The birds of the air would not be so free as I should. How I would prance and curvet it, and pick up cowslips, and ramble about purposeless, as an infant! The author-nometer is a good fancy. I have caused great speculation in the dramatic (not thy) world by a lying 'Life of Liston,' all pure invention. The town has swallowed it, and it is copied into newspapers, play bills, &c., as authentic. You do not know the droll, and probably missed reading the article (in our first number, new series). A life more improbable for him to have lived could not be easily invented. But your rebuke, coupled with 'Dreams on J. Bunyan,' checks me. I'd rather do more in my favourite way, but feel dry. I must laugh sometimes. I am poor Hypochondriacus, and *not* Liston.

“ I have been harassed more than usually at office, which has stopt my correspondence lately. I write with a confused aching head, and you must accept this apology for a letter.

“ I will do something soon, if I can, *as a peace-offering to the queen of the East Angles*—something she shan’t scold about.

“ For the present farewell.

“ Thine,

C. L.”

Freedom now gleamed on him, and he became restless with the approach of deliverance.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ March 1825.

“ Dear B. B.,—I have had no impulse to write, or attend to any single object but myself for weeks past—my single self, I by myself—I. I am sick of hope deferred. The grand wheel is in agitation, that is to turn up my fortune ; but round it rolls, and will turn up nothing. I have a glimpse of freedom, of becoming a gentleman at large ; but I am put off from day to day. I have offered my resignation, and it is neither accepted nor rejected. Eight weeks am I kept in this fearful suspense. Guess what an absorbing state I feel it. I am not

conscious of the existence of friends present or absent. The East India Directors alone can be that thing to me or not. I have just learned that nothing will be decided this week. Why the next? Why any week? It has fretted me into an itch of the fingers; I rub 'em against paper, and write to you, rather than not allay this scorbuta.

“While I can write, let me abjure you to have no doubts of IRVING. Let Mr. M—— drop his disrespect. Irving has prefixed a dedication (of a missionary subject, first part) to Coleridge, the most beautiful, cordial, and sincere. He there acknowledges his obligation to S. T. C. for his knowledge of Gospel truths, the nature of a Christian Church, &c., to the talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (at whose Gamaliel feet he sits weekly), rather than to that of all the men living. This from him, the great dandled and petted sectarian—to a religious character so equivocal in the world's eye as that of S. T. C., so foreign to the Kirk's estimate—can this man be a quack? The language is as affecting as the spirit of the dedication. Some friend told him, ‘This dedication will do you no good,’ *i. e.* not in the world's repute, or with your own people. ‘That is a reason for doing it,’ quoth Irving.

“I am thoroughly pleased with him. He is firm, out-speaking, intrepid, and docile as a pupil of Pythagoras. You must like him.

“Yours, in tremors of painful hope,

“C. LAMB.”

These tremors of painful hope were soon changed into certain joy. The following letters contain his own expressions of delight on his deliverance, as conveyed to several of his dearest friends. In the first his happiness is a little checked by the death of Mr. Monkhouse, a relation of Mrs. Wordsworth, who had gradually won Lamb's affections, and who nobly deserved them.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

“Colebrooke Cottage, 6th April, 1825.

“Dear Wordsworth,—I have been several times meditating a letter to you concerning the good thing which has befallen me, but the thought of poor Monkhouse came across me. He was one that I had exulted in the prospect of congratulating me. He and you were to have been the first participators, for indeed it has been ten weeks since the first motion of it. Here am I then, after

thirty-three years' slavery, sitting in my own room at eleven o'clock this finest of all April mornings, a freed man, with 441*l.* a-year for the remainder of my life, live I as long as John Dennis, who outlived his annuity and starved at ninety : 441*l.*, *i. e.* 450*l.*, with a deduction of 9*l.* for a provision secured to my sister, she being survivor, the pension guaranteed by Act Georgii Tertii, &c.

“I came home FOR EVER on Tuesday in last week. The incomprehensibleness of my condition overwhelmed me. It was like passing from life into eternity. Every year to be as long as three, *i. e.* to have three times as much real time—time that is my own, in it! I wandered about thinking I was happy, but feeling I was not. But that tumultuousness is passing off, and I begin to understand the nature of the gift. Holydays, even the annual month, were always uneasy joys, with their conscious fugitiveness; the craving after making the most of them. Now, when all is holyday, there are no holydays. I can sit at home, in rain or shine, without a restless impulse for walkings. I am daily steadying, and shall soon find it as natural to me to be my own master, as it has been irksome to have had a master. Mary wakes

every morning with an obscure feeling that some good has happened to us.

“—— and ——, after their releasements, describe the shock of their emancipation much as I feel mine. But it hurt their frames. I eat, drink, and sleep sound as ever. I lay no anxious schemes for going hither and thither, but take things as they occur. Yesterday I excursed twenty miles; to-day I write a few letters. Pleasuring was for fugitive play-days, mine are fugitive only in the sense that life is fugitive. Freedom and life co-existent !

“ At the foot of such a call upon you for gratulation, I am ashamed to advert to that melancholy event. Monkhouse was a character I learned to love slowly, but it grew upon me, yearly, monthly, daily. What a chasm has it made in our pleasant parties ! His noble friendly face was always coming before me, till this hurrying event in my life came, and for the time has absorbed all interest ; in fact it has shaken me a little. My old desk companions, with whom I have had such merry hours, seem to reproach me for removing my lot from among them. They were pleasant creatures ; but to the anxieties of business, and a

weight of possible worse ever impending, I was not equal. Indeed this last winter I was jaded out—winters were always worse than other parts of the year, because the spirits are worse, and I had no day-light. In summer I had day-light evenings. The relief was hinted to me from a superior power when I, poor slave, had not a hope but that I must wait another seven years with Jacob—and lo! the Rachel which I coveted is brought to me.

“Have you read the noble dedication of Irving’s ‘Missionary Orations’ to S. T. C. Who shall call this man a quack hereafter? What the Kirk will think of it neither I nor Irving care. When somebody suggested to him that it would not be likely to do him good, videlicet, among his own people, ‘That is a reason for doing it,’ was his noble answer. That Irving thinks he has profited mainly by S. T. C., I have no doubt. The very style of the Dedication shows it.

“Communicate my news to Southey, and beg his pardon for my being so long acknowledging his kind present of the ‘Church,’ which circumstances, having no reference to himself, prevented at the time. Assure him of my deep respect and friendliest feelings.

“ Divide the same, or rather each take the whole to you—I mean you and all yours. To Miss Hutchinson I must write separate.

“ Farewell ! and end at last, long selfish letter !

“ C. LAMB.”

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ Dear B. B.,—My spirits are so tumultuary with the novelty of my recent emancipation, that I have scarce steadiness of hand, much more mind, to compose a letter. I am free, B. B.—free as air !

‘ The little bird that wings the sky,
Knows no such liberty.’

I was set free on Tuesday in last week at four o’clock. I came home for ever !

“ I have been describing my feelings as well as I can to Wordsworth in a long letter, and don’t care to repeat. Take it briefly, that for a few days I was painfully oppressed by so mighty a change, but it is becoming daily more natural to me. I went and sat among ’em all at my old thirty-three-years’ desk yester morning ; and, deuce take me, if I had not yearnings at leaving all my old pen-and-ink fellows, merry, sociable lads, at leaving them in the lurch, fag, fag, fag !—

The comparison of my own superior felicity gave me any thing but pleasure.

“ B. B., I would not serve another seven years for seven hundred thousand pounds ! I have got 440*l.* net for life, sanctioned by act of parliament, with a provision for Mary if she survives me. I will live another fifty years ; or, if I live but ten, they will be thirty, reckoning the quantity of real time in them, *i. e.* the time that is a man’s own. Tell me how you like ‘ Barbara S.* ;’ will it be received in atonement for the foolish ‘ Vision’—I mean by the lady ? *A-propos*, I never saw Mrs. Crawford in my life ; nevertheless, it’s all true of somebody.

“ Address me, in future, Colebrooke-cottage, Islington. I am really nervous (but that will wear off), so take this brief announcement.

“ Yours truly, C. L.”

TO MISS HUTCHINSON.

“ Dear Miss Hutchinson,—You want to know all about my gaol delivery. Take it then. About twelve weeks since I had a sort of intimation that

* The true heroine of this beautiful story is still living, though she has left the stage. It is enough to make a severer quaker than B. B. feel “ that there is some soul of goodness ” in players.

a resignation might be well accepted from me. This was a kind bird's whisper. On that hint I spake. G—— and T—— furnished me with certificates of wasted health and sore spirits—not much more than the truth, I promise you—and for nine weeks I was kept in a fright. I had gone too far to recede, and they might take advantage, and dismiss me with a much less sum than I had reckoned on. However, liberty came at last, with a liberal provision. I have given up what I could have lived on in the country; but have enough to live here by management and scribbling occasionally. I would not go back to my prison for seven years longer for 10,000*l.* a-year—seven years after one is fifty, is no trifle to give up. Still I am a young *pensioner*, and have served but thirty-three years; very few, I assure you, retire before forty, forty-five, or fifty years' service.

“You will ask how I bear my freedom? Faith, for some days I was staggered; could not comprehend the magnitude of my deliverance; was confused, giddy; knew not whether I was on my head or my heel, as they say. But those giddy feelings have gone away, and my weather-glass stands at a degree or two above

“ I go about quiet, and have none of that restless hunting after recreation, which made holydays formerly uneasy joys. All being holydays, I feel as if I had none, as they do in heaven, where ’tis all red-letter days. I have a kind letter from the Wordsworths, *congratulatory* not a little. It is a damp, I do assure you, amid all my prospects, that I can receive *none* from a quarter upon which I had calculated, almost more than from any, upon receiving congratulations. I had grown to like poor Monkhouse more and more. I do not esteem a soul living or not living more warmly than I had grown to esteem and value him. But words are vain. We have none of us to count upon many years. That is the only cure for sad thoughts. If only some died, and the rest were permanent on earth, what a thing a friend’s death would be then !

“ I must take leave, having put off answering a load of letters to this morning, and this, alas ! is the first. Our kindest remembrances to Mrs. Monkhouse,

“ And believe us yours most truly,

“ C. LAMB.

“ 18th April, 1825.”

In this summer Lamb and his sister paid a long visit to Enfield, which induced their removing

thither some time afterwards. The following letter is addressed thence,

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

“ 19th August, 1825.

“ Dear Southey,—You’ll know who this letter comes from by opening slap dash upon the text, as in the good old times. I never could come into the custom of envelopes; ’tis a modern foppery; the Plinian correspondence gives no hint of such. In singleness of sheet and meaning, then, I thank you for your little book. I am ashamed to add a codicil of thanks for your ‘Book of the Church.’ I scarce feel competent to give an opinion of the latter; I have not reading enough of that kind to venture at it. I can only say the fact, that I have read it with attention and interest. Being, as you know, not quite a Churchman, I felt a jealousy at the Church taking to herself the whole deserts of Christianity, Catholic and Protestant, from Druid extirpation downwards. I call all good Christians the Church, Capillarians and all. But I am in too light a humour to touch these matters. May all our churches flourish! Two things staggered me in the poem, (and one of them staggered both of us). I cannot away with a beautiful series of

verses, as I protest they are, commencing ‘Jenner.’ ’Tis like a choice banquet opened with a pill or an electuary—physic stuff. T’other is, we cannot make out how Edith should be no more than ten years old. By’r Lady, we had taken her to be some sixteen or upwards. We suppose you have only chosen the round number for the metre. Or poem and dedication may be both older than they pretend to; but then some hint might have been given; for, as it stands, it may only serve some day to puzzle the parish reckoning. But without inquiring further, (for ’tis ungracious to look into a lady’s years,) the dedication is eminently pleasing and tender, and we wish Edith May Southey joy of it. Something, too, struck us as if we had heard of the death of John May. A John May’s death was a few years since in the papers. We think the tale one of the quietest, prettiest things we have seen. You have been temperate in the use of localities, which generally spoil poems laid in exotic regions. You mostly cannot stir out (in such things) for humming-birds and fire-flies. A tree is a Magnolia, &c.

‘Can I but like the truly Catholic spirit?

Blame as thou mayest the Papist’s erring creed’—

which, and other passages, brought me back to the

old Anthology days, and the admonitory lesson to 'Dear George' on 'The Vesper Bell,' a little poem which retains its first hold upon me strangely.

"The compliment to the translatress is daintily conceived. Nothing is choicer in that sort of writing than to bring in some remote, impossible parallel,—as between a great empress and the inobtrusive quiet soul who digged her noiseless way so perseveringly through that rugged Paraguay mine. How she Dobrizhoffer'd it all out, it puzzles my slender Latinity to conjecture. Why do you seem to sanction Landor's allegorizing away of honest Quixote! He may as well say Strap is meant to symbolize the Scottish nation before the Union, and Random since that act of dubious issue; or that Partridge means the Mystical Man, and Lady Bellaston typifies the Woman upon Many Waters. Gebir, indeed, may mean the state of the hop markets last month, for any thing I know to the contrary. That all Spain overflowed with romancical books (as Madge Newcastle calls them) was no reason that Cervantes should not smile at the matter of them; nor even a reason that, in another mood, he might not multiply them, deeply as he was tinctured with the essence of them. Quixote is the father of gentle ridicule,

and at the same time the very depository and treasury of chivalry and highest notions. Marry, when somebody persuaded Cervantes that he meant only fun, and put him upon writing that unfortunate second part, with the confederacies of that unworthy duke and most contemptible duchess, Cervantes sacrificed his instinct to his understanding.

“ We got your little book but last night, being at Enfield, to which place we came about a month since, and are having quiet holydays. Mary walks her twelve miles a day some days, and I my twenty on others. ’Tis all holyday with me now, you know. The change works admirably.

“ For literary news, in my poor way, I have a one-act farce going to be acted at Haymarket; but when? is the question. ’Tis an extravaganza, and like enough to follow Mr. H. ‘The London Magazine’ has shifted its publishers once more, and I shall shift myself out of it. It is fallen. My ambition is not at present higher than to write nonsense for the playhouses, to eke out a something contracted income. *Tempus erat*. There was a time, my dear Cornwallis, when the Muse, &c. But I am now in Mac Fleckno’s predicament,—

‘ Promised a play, and dwindled to a farce.’

“ Coleridge is better (was, at least, a few weeks since) than he has been for years. His accomplishing his book at last has been a source of vigour to him. We are on a half visit to his friend Allsop, at a Mrs. Leishman's, Enfield, but expect to be at Colebrooke Cottage in a week or so, where, or any where, I shall be always most happy to receive tidings from you. G. Dyer is in the height of an uxorious paradise. His honeymoon will not wane till he wax cold. Never was a more happy pair, since Acme and Septimius, and longer. Farewell, with many thanks, dear S. Our loves to all round your Wrekin.

“ Your old friend,

“ C. LAMB.”

The farce referred to in this letter was founded on Lamb's essay “On the Inconvenience of being Hanged.” It was, perhaps, too slight for the stage, and never was honoured by a trial; but was ultimately published in “Blackwood's Magazine.”

CHAPTER XVI.

[1826 to 1828.]

LETTERS TO ROBINSON, CAREY, COLERIDGE,
PATMORE, PROCTER, AND BARTON.

WHEN the first enjoyment of freedom was over, it may be doubted whether Lamb was happier for the change. He lost a grievance on which he could lavish all the fantastical exaggeration of a sufferer without wounding the feelings of any individual, and perhaps the loss was scarcely compensated by the listless leisure which it brought him. Whenever the facile kindness of his disposition permitted, he fled from those temptations of society, which he could only avoid by flight; and his evening hours of solitude were hardly so sweet as when they were the reliefs and resting places of his mind,—“glimpses which might make him less forlorn” of the world of poetry and romance. His

mornings were chiefly occupied in long walks, sometimes extending to ten or twelve miles, in which at this time he was accompanied by a noble dog, the property of Mr. Hood, to whose humours Lamb became almost a slave, and who, at last, acquired so portentous an ascendancy that Lamb requested his friend Mr. Patmore to take him under his care.*

* The following allusion to Lamb's subservience to Dash is extracted from one of a series of papers, written in a most cordial spirit, and with great characteristic power, by the friend to whom Dash was assigned, which appeared in the "Court Magazine." "During these interminable rambles—heretofore pleasant in virtue of their profound loneliness and freedom from restraint, Lamb made himself a perfect slave to the dog—whose habits were of the most extravagantly errant nature, for, generally speaking, the creature was half a mile off from his companion either before or behind, scouring the fields or roads in all directions, scampering up or down, 'all manner of streets,' and leaving Lamb in a perfect fever of irritation and annoyance; for he was afraid of losing the dog when it was out of sight, and yet could not persuade himself to keep it *in sight* for a moment, by curbing its roving spirit. Dash knew Lamb's weakness in these particulars as well as he did himself, and took a due dog-like advantage of it. In the Regent's Park, in particular, Dash had his master completely at his mercy; for the moment they got into the ring, he used to get through the paling on to the green sward, and disappear for a quarter or half an hour together, knowing perfectly well that Lamb did not dare move from the spot where he (Dash) had disappeared, till such time as he thought proper to show himself again. And they used to take this particular walk much oftener than they otherwise would, precisely because Dash liked it and Lamb did not."—Under his second master, we learn from the same source, that Dash "subsided into the best bred and best behaved of his species."

At length the desire of assisting Mr. Hone, in his struggle to support his family by antiquarian research and modern pleasantry renewed to him the blessing of regular labour; he began the task of reading through the glorious heap of dramas collected at the British Museum under the title of the "Gar-rick Plays," to glean scenes of interest and beauty for the work of his friend; and the work of kindness brought with it its own reward.

"It is a sort of office work to me," says Lamb, in a letter to Barton; "hours ten to four the same. It does me good. Men must have regular occupation that have been used to it."

The Christmas of 1825 was a melancholy season for Lamb. He had always from a boy spent Christmas in the Temple with Mr. Norris, an officer of the Inner Temple, and this Christmas was made wretched by the last illness of his oldest friend. Anxious to excite the sympathy of the Benchers of the Inn for the survivors, Lamb addressed the following letter to a friend as zealous as himself in all generous offices, in order that he might show it to some of the Benchers.

TO MR. H. C. ROBINSON.

“Colebrooke Row, Islington, Saturday 20th Jan. 1826.

“Dear Robinson,—I called upon you this morning, and found you were gone to visit a dying friend. I had been upon a like errand. Poor Norris has been lying dying for now almost a week, such is the penalty we pay for having enjoyed a strong constitution! Whether he knew me or not, I know not; or whether he saw me through his poor glazed eyes; but the group I saw about him I shall not forget. Upon the bed or about it were assembled his wife and two daughters, and poor deaf Richard, his son, looking doubly stupified. There they were, and seemed to have been sitting all the week. I could only reach out a hand to Mrs. Norris. Speaking was impossible in that mute chamber. By this time I hope it is all over with him. In him I have a loss the world cannot make up. He was my friend and my father’s friend all the life I can remember. I seem to have made foolish friendships ever since. Those are friendships which outlive a second generation. Old as I am waxing, in his eyes I was still the child he first knew me. To the

last he called me Charley. I have none to call me Charley now. He was the last link that bound me to the Temple. You are but of yesterday. In him seem to have died the old plainness of manners and singleness of heart. Letters he knew nothing of, nor did his reading extend beyond the pages of the ‘Gentleman’s Magazine.’ Yet there was a pride of literature about him from being amongst books (he was librarian), and from some scraps of doubtful Latin which he had picked up in his office of entering students, that gave him very diverting airs of pedantry. Can I forget the erudite look with which, when he had been in vain trying to make out a black-letter text of Chaucer in the Temple Library, he laid it down, and told me that—‘in those old books, Charley, there is sometimes a deal of very indifferent spelling;’ and seemed to console himself in the reflection! His jokes, for he had his jokes, are now ended; but they were old trusty perennials, staples that pleased after *decies repetita*, and were always as good as new. One song he had, which was reserved for the night of Christmas-day, which we always spent in the Temple. It was an old thing, and spoke of the flat bottoms of our foes, and the pos-

sibility of their coming over in darkness, and alluded to threats of an invasion many years blown over; and when he came to the part

‘ We’ll still make ’em run, and we’ll still make ’em sweat,
In spite of the devil, and Brussels Gazette!’

his eyes would sparkle as with the freshness of an impending event. And what is the Brussels Gazette now? I cry while I enumerate these trifles. ‘ How shall we tell them in a stranger’s ear?’

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“ My first motive in writing, and, indeed, in calling on you, was to ask if you were enough acquainted with any of the benchers, to lay a plain statement before them of the circumstances of the family. I almost fear not, for you are of another hall. But if you can oblige me and my poor friend, who is now insensible to any favours, pray exert yourself. You cannot say too much good of poor Norris and his poor wife.

“ Yours ever,

“ CHARLES LAMB.”

In the spring of 1826, the following letters to Bernard Barton were written.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“Dear B. B.,—I got your book not more than five days ago, so am not so negligent as I must have appeared to you with a fortnight’s sin upon my shoulders. I tell you with sincerity, that I think you have completely succeeded in what you intended to do. What is poetry may be disputed,—these are poetry to me at least. They are concise, pithy, and moving; uniform as they are, and unembellished. I read them through at two sittings, without one sensation approaching to tedium. I do not know that among your many kind presents of this nature, this is not my favourite volume. The language is never lax, and there is a unity of design and feeling. You wrote them *with love*—to avoid the coxcombical phrase, *con amore*. I am particularly pleased with the ‘Spiritual Law,’ pages 34 and 35. It reminded me of Quarles, and ‘holy Mr. Herbert,’ as Izaak Walton calls him; the two best, if not only, of our devotional poets, though some prefer Watts, and some Tom Moore. I am far from well, or in my right spirits, and shudder at pen and ink work. I poke out a monthly crudity for Colburn in his

magazine, which I call ‘Popular Fallacies,’ and periodically crush a proverb or two, setting up my folly against the wisdom of nations. Do you see the ‘New Monthly?’

“One word I must object to in your little book, and it recurs more than once—*fadeless* is no genuine compound; loveless is, because love is a noun as well as a verb; but what is a fade? And I do not quite like whipping the Greek drama upon the back of ‘Genesis,’ page 8. I do not like praise handed in by disparagement; as I objected to a side censure on Byron, &c. in the ‘Lines on Bloomfield.’ With these poor cavils excepted, your verses are without a flaw.

“C. LAMB.”

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“Dear B. B.,—You may know my letters by the paper and the folding. For the former, I live on scraps obtained in charity from an old friend whose stationery is a permanent perquisite; for folding, I shall do it neatly when I learn to tie my neckcloths. I surprise most of my friends, by writing to them on ruled paper, as if I had not got

past pot-hooks and hangers. Sealing wax, I have none on my establishment; wafers of the coarsest bran supply its place. *When my epistles come to be weighed with Pliny's*, however *superior to the Roman* in delicate irony, judicious reflections, &c., his *gilt post* would bribe over the judges to him. All the time I was at the India House I never mended a pen; I now cut them to the stumps, marring rather than mending the primitive goose quill. I cannot bear to pay for articles I used to get for nothing. (When Adam laid out his first penny upon nonpareils at some stall in Mesopotamia, I think it went hard with him, reflecting upon his old goodly orchard, where he had so many for nothing.) When I write to a great man at the court end, he opens with surprise upon a naked note, such as Whitechapel people interchange, with no sweet degrees of envelope. I never enclosed one bit of paper in another, nor understood the rationale of it. Once only I sealed with borrowed wax, to set Sir Walter Scott a wondering, impressed with the imperial quartered arms of England, which my friend Field bears in compliment to his descent, in the female line, from Oliver Cromwell. It must have set his antiqua-

rian curiosity upon watering. To your question upon the currency, I refer you to Mr. Robinson's last speech, where, if you can find a solution, I cannot. I think this, though, the best ministry we ever stumbled upon;—gin reduced four shillings in the gallon, wine two shillings in the quart! This comes home to men's business and bosoms. My tirade against visitors was not meant particularly at you or A. K——. I scarce know what I meant, for I do not just now feel the grievance. I wanted to make an *article*. So in another thing I talked of somebody's *insipid wife*, without a correspondent object in my head: and a good lady, a friend's wife, whom I really *love*, (don't startle, I mean in a lawful way,) has looked shyly on me ever since. The blunders of personal application are ludicrous. I send out a character now and then, on purpose to exercise the ingenuity of my friends. 'Popular Fallacies' will go on. A little thing without name will also be printed on the Religion of the Actors, but it is out of your way, so I recommend you, with true author's hypocrisy, to skip it. We are about to sit down to roast beef, at which we could wish B. B. and B. B.'s daughter to be humble partakers. So much for

my hint at visitors, which was scarcely calculated for droppers-in from Woodbridge: the sky does not drop such larks every day. My very kindest wishes to you all, with my sister's best love.

“C. LAMB.”

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“May 16, 1826.

Dear B. B.,—I have had no spirits lately to begin a letter to you, though I am under obligations to you (how many?) for your neat little poem. 'Tis just what it professes to be, a simple tribute, in chaste verse, serious and sincere.

“I do not know how Friends will relish it, but we out-lyers, honorary friends, like it very well. I have had my head and ears stuffed up with the east winds. A continual ringing in my brain of bells jangled, or the spheres touched by some raw angel. Is it not George the Third tuning the Hundredth Psalm? I get my music for nothing. But the weather seems to be softening, and will thaw my stunnings. Coleridge, writing to me a week or two since, began his note—‘*Summer has set in with his usual severity.*’ A cold summer is all I know disagreeable in cold. I do

not mind the utmost rigour of real winter, but these smiling hypocritical Mays wither me to death. My head has been ringing chaos, like the day the winds were made, before they submitted to the discipline of a weathercock, before the quarters were made. In the street, with the blended noises of life about me, I hear, and my head is lightened, but in a room the hubbub comes back, and I am deaf as a sinner. Did I tell you of a pleasant sketch Hood has done, which he calls—‘*Very deaf indeed.*’ It is of a good-natured stupid-looking old gentleman, whom a footpad has stopped, but for his extreme deafness cannot make him understand what he wants. The unconscious old gentleman is extending his ear-trumpet very complacently, and the fellow is firing a pistol into it to make him hear, but the ball will pierce his skull sooner than the report reach his sensorium. I choose a very little bit of paper, for my ear hisses when I bend down to write. I can hardly read a book, for *I miss that small soft voice which the idea of articulated words raises* (almost imperceptibly to you) *in a silent reader.* *I seem too deaf to see what I read.* But with a touch of returning zephyr my head will melt. What lies you poets tell about May! It is the most ungenial part of the year.

Cold crocuses, cold primroses, you take your blossoms in ice—a painted sun.

Unmeaning joy around appears,
And nature smiles as though she sneers!

“It is ill with me when I begin to look which way the wind blows. Ten years ago, I literally did not know the point from the broad end of your vane, which it was that indicated the quarter. I hope these ill winds have blown *over* you as they do through me.

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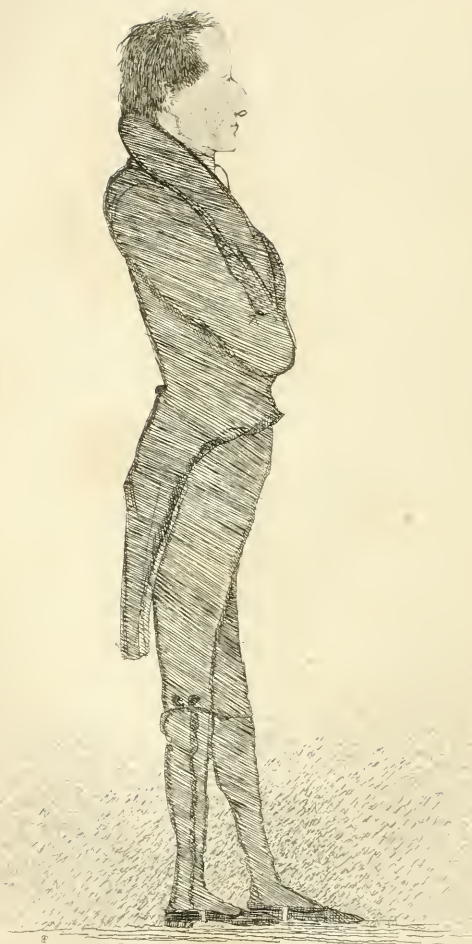
So A. K. keeps a school; she teaches nothing wrong, I'll answer for't. I have a Dutch print of a school-mistress; surrounded by little old-fashioned Fleminglings, with only one face among them. She a princess of a school-mistress, wielding a rod for form more than use; the scena, an old monastic chapel, with a Madonna over her head, looking just as serious, as thoughtful, as pure, as gentle as herself. 'Tis a type of thy friend.

“Yours with kindest wishes,

“C. LAMB.”

About this time a little sketch was taken of Lamb, and published. It is certainly not flattering;





Scratched on Copper from Life in 1825 by his friend Brook Pulham.

Charles Lamb

but there is a touch of Lamb's character in it which may make it acceptable to his friends, and it has been accordingly engraved for this volume. He sent one of the prints to Coleridge, with the following note.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

“ Dear Coleridge,—If I know myself, nobody more detests the display of personal vanity, which is implied in the act of sitting for one's picture, than myself. But the fact is, that the likeness which accompanies this letter was stolen from my person at one of my unguarded moments by some too partial artist, and my friends are pleased to think that he has not much flattered me. Whatever its merits may be, you, who have so great an interest in the original, will have a satisfaction in tracing the features of one that has so long esteemed you. There are times when in a friend's absence these graphic representations of him almost seem to bring back the man himself. The painter, whoever he was, seems to have taken me in one of those disengaged moments, if I may so term them, when the native character is so much more honestly displayed than can be possible in the restraints of an enforced sitting attitude. Perhaps it rather

describes me as a thinking man, than a man in the act of thought. Whatever its pretensions, I know it will be dear to you, towards whom I should wish my thoughts to flow in a sort of an undress rather than in the more studied graces of diction.

“I am, dear Coleridge, yours sincerely,

“C. LAMB.”

In the following summer, Lamb and his sister went on a long visit to Enfield, which ultimately led to his giving up Colebrooke Cottage, and becoming a constant resident at that place. It was a great sacrifice to him, who loved London so well; but his sister's health and his own required a secession from the crowd of visitors who pressed on him at Islington, and whom he could not help welcoming. He thus invited Mr. Carey, now of the British Museum, to look in upon his retreat.

TO MR. CAREY.

“Dear Sir,—It is whisper'd me that you will not be unwilling to look into our doleful hermitage. Without more preface, you will gladden our cell by accompanying our old chums of the London, Darley and A. C. to Enfield on Wednesday. You shall have hermits' fare, with talk as seraphical as

the novelty of the divine life will permit, with an innocent retrospect to the world which we have left, when I will thank you for your hospitable offer at Chiswick, and with plain hermit reasons evince the necessity of abiding here.

“ Without hearing from you, then, you shall give us leave to expect you. I have long had it on my conscience to invite you, but spirits have been low ; and I am indebted to chance for this awkward but most sincere invitation.

“ Yours, with best loves to Mrs. Carey,

“ C. LAMB.

“ D. knows all about the coaches. O for a Museum in the wilderness !”

The following letter was addressed about this time to Coleridge, who was seriously contemplating a poetical pantomime.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

“ Dear C.,—We will with great pleasure be with you on Thursday in the next week early. Your finding out my style in your nephew’s pleasant book is surprising to me. I want eyes to descry it. You are a little too hard upon his morality,

though I confess he has more of Sterne about him than Sternhold. But he saddens into excellent sense before the conclusion. Your query shall be submitted to Miss Kelly, though it is obvious that the pantomime, when done, will be more easy to decide upon than in proposal. I say, do it by all means. I have Decker's play by me, if you can filch any thing out of it. Miss G——, with her kitten eyes, is an actress, though she shows it not at all; and pupil to the former, whose gestures she mimics in comedy to the disparagement of her own natural manner, which is agreeable. It is funny to see her bridling up her neck, which is native to F. K.; but there is no setting another's manners upon one's shoulders any more than their head. I am glad you esteem Manning, though you see but his husk or shrine. He discloses not, save to select worshippers, and will leave the world without any one hardly but me knowing how stupendous a creature he is. I am perfecting myself in the 'Ode to Eton College' against Thursday, that I may not appear unclassic. I have just discovered that it is much better than the 'Elegy.'

“ In haste,

“ C. L.

“ P.S. I do not know what to say to your *latest*

theory about Nero being the Messiah, though by all accounts he was a 'nointed one."

Lamb's desire for dramatic success was not even yet wholly chilled. In this summer he wrote a little piece on the story of Crabbe's tale of the "Confidant," which was never produced, but ultimately published in "Blackwood's Magazine." It runs on agreeably in melodious blank verse, entirely free from the occasional roughnesses of "John Woodvil," but has not sufficient breadth or point for the stage. He alludes to it in the following letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

"Dear B. B.,—I have not been able to answer you, for we have had, and are having, (I just snatch a moment) our poor quiet retreat, to which we fled from society, full of company. Whither can I take wing, from the oppression of human faces? Would I were in a wilderness of apes, tossing cocoa-nuts about, grinning and grinned at!

"M—— was hoaxing you, surely, about my engraving; 'tis a little sixpenny thing, too like by half, in which the draughtsman has done his best to avoid flattery. There have been two editions of

it, which I think are all gone, as they have vanished from the window where they hung,—a print-shop, corner of Great and Little Queen-street, Lincoln's Inn Fields,—where any London friend of yours may inquire for it; for I am (though you *won't understand it*) at Enfield Chace. We have been here near three months, and shall stay two more, if people will let us alone; but they persecute us from village to village. So, don't direct to Islington again, till further notice. I am trying my hand at a drama, in two acts, founded on Crabbe's 'Confidant,' *mutatis mutandis*. You like the Odyssey; did you ever read my 'Adventures of Ulysses,' founded on Chapman's old translation of it? for children or men. Chapman is divine, and my abridgment has not quite emptied him of his divinity. When you come to town I will show it you. You have well described your old fashionable grand paternal hall. Is it not odd that every one's earliest recollections are of some such place! I had my Blakesware (Blakesmoor in the 'London'). Nothing fills a child's mind like a large old mansion; better if un—or partially—occupied, peopled with the spirits of deceased members for the county, and justices of the quorum. Would I were buried in the peopled solitude of one, with my feel-

ings at seven years old ! Those marble busts of the emperors, they seemed as if they were to stand for ever, as they had stood from the living ages of Rome, in that old marble hall, and I to partake of their permanency. Eternity was, while I thought not of Time. But he thought of me, and they are toppled down, and corn covers the spot of the noble old dwelling and its princely gardens. I feel like a grasshopper that, chirping about the grounds, escapes his scythe only by my littleness. Even now he is whetting one of his smallest razors to clean wipe me out, perhaps. Well ! ”

The following is an acknowledgment of some verses which Lamb had begged for Miss Isola’s album.

“ Dear B. B.,—I am thankful to you for your ready compliance with my wishes. Emma is delighted with your verses ; and I have sent them, with four album poems of my own, to a Mr. F——, who is to be the editor of a more superb pocket-book than has yet appeared, by far ! the property of some wealthy booksellers ; but whom, or what its name, I forgot to ask. It is actually to have in it schoolboy exercises by his present Majesty and

the late Duke of York. Wordsworth is named as a contributor. F——, whom I have slightly seen, is editor of a forthcome or coming review of foreign books, and is intimately connected with Lockhart and ——. So I take it that this is a concern of Murray's. Walter Scott also contributes mainly. I have stood off a long time from these annuals, which are ostentatious trumpery, but could not withstand the request of Jameson, a particular friend of mine and Coleridge's.

“ I shall hate myself in frippery, strutting along, and

‘ Vying in finery with beaux and belles,
Future Lord Byrons and sweet L. E. L.'s.’

Your taste, I see, is less simple than mine, which the difference in our persuasions has doubtless effected. In fact, of late you have so Frenchified your style, larding it with *hors de combat*, and *au desespoirs*, that o' my conscience the Foxian blood is quite dried out of you, and the skipping Monsieur spirit has been infused.

“ If you have any thing you like to send further, I dare say an honourable place would be given to it; but I have not heard from F— since I sent mine, nor shall I probably again, and therefore I do not solicit it as from him. Yesterday I sent off my tragedy to Mr. Kemble; wish it luck. I made it

all ('tis blank verse, and I think of the true old dramatic cut) or most of it, in the green lanes about Enfield, where I am, and mean to remain, in spite of your peremptory doubts on that head. Your refusal to lend your poetical sanction to my 'Icon,' and your reasons to Evans are most sensible. Maybe I may hit on a line or two of my own jocular; maybe not. Do you never Londonize again? I should like to talk over old poetry with you, of which I have much, and you, I think, little. I would willingly come and work for you three weeks or so, to let you loose. Would I could sell or give you some of my leisure! POSITIVELY, THE BEST THING A MAN CAN HAVE TO DO IS NOTHING! and, *next to that*, perhaps, GOOD WORKS! I am but poorlyish, and feel myself writing a dull letter; poorlyish from company; not generally, for I never was better, nor took more walks, fourteen miles a day on an average, with a sporting dog, Dash. You would not know the plain poet, any more than he doth recognize James Naylor trick'd out *au désespoir* (how do you spell it?)

“ C. LAMB.”

The following was written to the friend to whom Lamb had intrusted Dash, a few days after the parting.

TO MR. PATMORE.

“ Mrs. Leishman’s, Chace, Enfield.

“ Dear P.,—Excuse my anxiety, but how is Dash? I should have asked if Mrs. P——e kept her rules, and was improving; but Dash came up-permost. The order of our thoughts should be the order of our writing. Goes he muzzled, or *aperto ore*? Are his intellects sound, or does he wander a little in *his* conversation? You cannot be too careful to watch the first symptoms of incoherence. The first illogical snarl he makes, to St. Luke’s with him. All the dogs here are going mad, if you believe the overseers; but I protest they seem to me very rational and collected. But nothing is so deceitful as mad people, to those who are not used to them. Try him with hot water: if he won’t lick it up, it is a sign—he does not like it. Does his tail wag horizontally, or perpendicularly? That has decided the fate of many dogs in Enfield. Is his general deportment cheerful? I mean when he is pleased—for otherwise there is no judging. You can’t be too careful. Has he bit any of the children yet? If he has, have them shot, and keep *him* for curiosity, to see if it was the hydrophobia. They say all our army in India had it at one time;

but that was in *Hyder-Ally's* time. Do you get paunch for him? Take care the sheep was sane. You might pull out his teeth (if he would let you), and then you need not mind if he were as mad as a bedlamite. It would be rather fun to see his odd ways. It might amuse Mrs. P—— and the children. They'd have more sense than he. He'd be like a fool kept in a family, to keep the household in good humour with their own understanding. You might teach him the mad dance, set to the mad howl. *Madge Owlet* would be nothing to him. 'My! how he capers!' [In the margin is written, 'One of the children speaks this*.']

* *

What I scratch out is a German quotation, from Lessing, on the bite of rabid animals; but I remember you don't read German. But Mrs. P—— may, so I wish I had let it stand. The meaning in English is—'Avoid to approach an animal suspected of madness, as you would avoid fire or a precipice,' which I think is a sensible observation. The Germans are certainly profounder than we. If the slightest suspicion arises in your breast that all is not right with him, muzzle him and lead him in a string (common pack-thread will do—he don't care for twist) to Mr. Hood's, his quondam master,

* Here three lines are carefully erased.

and he'll take him in at any time. You may mention your suspicion, or not, as you like, or as you think it may wound or not Mr. H.'s feelings. Hood, I know, will wink at a few follies in Dash, in consideration of his former sense. Besides, Hood is deaf, and, if you hinted any thing, ten to one he would not hear you. Besides, you will have discharged your conscience, and laid the child at the right door, as they say.

“ We are dawdling our time away very idly and pleasantly at a Mrs. Leishman's, Chace, Enfield, where, if you come a hunting, we can give you cold meat and a tankard. Her husband is a tailor; but that, you know, does not make her one. I knew a jailor (which rhymes), but his wife was a fine lady.

“ Let us hear from you respecting Mrs. P——'s regimen. I send my love in a —— to Dash.

“ C. LAMB.”

On the *outside* of the letter is written:—

“ Seriously, I wish you would call upon Hood when you are that way. He's a capital fellow. I've sent him two poems, one ordered by his wife, and written to order; and 'tis a week since, and I've not heard from him. I fear something is the matter.

“ Omitted within :

“ Our kindest remembrance to Mrs. P.”

He thus, in December, expresses his misery in a letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ My dear B. B.,—I have scarce spirits to write, yet am harassed with not writing. Enfield, and every thing, is very gloomy. I feel most thankful for the spinsterly attentions of your sister. Thank that kind ‘ knitter in the sun !’ What nonsense seems verse when one is seriously out of hope and spirits ! I mean, that at this time I have some nonsense to write, under pain of incivility. Would to the fifth heaven no coxcombress had ever invented Albums !

“ I have not received the Annual, nor the slightest notice from —— about omitting four or five of my things. The best thing is never to hear of such a thing as a bookseller again, or to think there are publishers. Second-hand stationers and old book-stalls for me ; authorship should be an idea of the past. Old kings, old bishops, are venerable ; all present is hollow. I cannot make a letter. I have no straw, not a pennyworth of chaff,

only this may stop your kind importunity to know about us. There is a comfortable house, but no tenants. *One* does not make a *household*. Do not think I am quite in despair; but, in addition to hope protracted, I have a stupifying cold and obstructing headache, and the sun is dead!

“ I will not fail to apprise you of the *rêvival* of a beam. Meantime accept this, rather than think I have forgotten you all.” * * *

A proposal to erect a memorial to Clarkson, upon the spot by the way-side where he stopped when on a journey from Cambridge to London, and formed the great resolution of devoting his life to the abolition of the slave trade, produced from Lamb the following letter to the lady who had announced it to him:—

“ Dear Madam,—I return your list with my name. I should be sorry that any respect should be going on towards Clarkson, and I be left out of the conspiracy. Otherwise, I frankly own that to pillarize a man’s good feelings in his lifetime is not to my taste. Monuments to goodness, even after death, are equivocal. I turn away from Howard’s, I scarce know why. Goodness blows no trumpet, nor desires to have it blown. *We should be modest*

for a modest man—as he is for himself. The vanities of life—art, poetry, skill military—are subjects for trophies; not the silent thoughts arising in a good man's mind in lonely places. Was I Clarkson, I should never be able to walk or ride near the spot again. Instead of bread, we are giving him a stone. Instead of the locality recalling the noblest moment of his existence, it is a place at which his friends (that is, himself) blow to the world, ‘What a good man is he!’ I sate down upon a hillock at Forty Hill yesternight,—a fine contemplative evening,—with a thousand good speculations about mankind. How I yearned with cheap benevolence! I shall go and inquire of the stone-cutter, that cuts the tombstones here, what a stone with a short inscription will cost; just to say, ‘Here C. Lamb loved his brethren of mankind.’ Everybody will come there to love. As I can't well put my own name, I shall put about a subscription:

Mrs. ———	£0	5	0	
Procter,	0	2	6	
G. Dyer,	0	1	0	
Mr. Godwin,	0	0	0	
Mrs. Godwin,	0	0	0	
Mr. Irving,				a watch chain.
Mr. ———				the proceeds of ——— first edition.
<hr/>				
	£0	8	6	

“I scribble in haste from here, where we shall be some time. Pray request Mr. ——— to advance the guinea for me, which shall faithfully be forthcoming; and pardon me that I don't see the proposal in quite the light that he may. The kindness of his motives, and his power of appreciating the passage, I thoroughly agree in.

“With most kind regards to him, I conclude,

“Dear madam, yours truly,

“C. LAMB.

“From Mrs. Leishman's, Chace, Enfield.”

The following appears to have been written in October 1828.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“A splendid edition of ‘Bunyan's Pilgrim!’ Why the thought is enough to turn one's moral stomach. His cockle-hat and staff, transformed to a smart cock'd beaver, and a jemmy cane; his amice grey, to the last Regent Street cut; and his painful palmer's pace to the modern swagger. Stop thy friend's sacrilegious hand. Nothing can be done for B. but to reprint the old cuts in as homely but good a style as possible. The Vanity Fair, and the

Pilgrims there—The Silly-soothness in his setting-out countenance—The Christian Idiocy (in a good sense), of his admiration of the shepherds on the Delectable Mountains; The lions, so truly allegorical, and remote from any similitude to Pidcock's; The great head (the author's), capacious of dreams and similitudes, dreaming in the dungeon. Perhaps you don't know my edition, what I had when a child. If you do, can you bear new designs from Martin, enamelled into copper or silver-plate by Heath, accompanied with verses from Mrs. Hemans' pen. O how unlike his own!

Would'st thou divert thyself from melancholy?
 Would'st thou be pleasant, yet be far from folly?
 Would'st thou read riddles, and their explanation?
 Or else be drowned in thy contemplation?
 Do'st thou love picking meat? or would'st thou see
 A man i' the clouds, and hear him speak to thee?
 Would'st thou be in a dream, and yet not sleep?
 Or would'st thou in a moment laugh and weep?
 Or would'st thou lose thyself, and catch no harm,
 And find thyself again without a charm?
 Would'st read *thyself*, and read thou know'st not what,
 And yet know whether thou art blest or not
 By reading the same lines? O then come hither,
 And lay my book, thy head, and heart, together.

JOHN BUNYAN.

Shew me such poetry in any one of the fifteen forthcoming combinations of show and emptiness, yclept 'Annuals.' So there's verses for thy verses;

and now let me tell you, that the sight of your hand gladdened me. I have been daily trying to write to you, but paralysed. You have spurred me on to this tiny effort, and at intervals I hope to hear from and talk to you. But my spirits have been in an opprest way for a long time, and they are things which must be to you of faith, for who can explain depression ! Yes, I am hooked into the 'Gem,' but only for some lines written on a dead infant of the Editor's, which being, as it were, his property, I could not refuse their appearing ; but I hate the paper, the type, the gloss, the dandy plates, the names of contributors poked up into your eyes in the first page, and whisked through all the covers of magazines, the barefaced sort of emulation, the immodest candidateship, brought into so little space. In those old 'Londons', a signature was lost in the wood of matter, the paper coarse (till latterly, which spoiled them) ; in short, I detest to appear in an annual. What a fertile genius (and a quiet good soul withal) is Hood. He has fifty things in hand ; farces to supply the Adelphi for the season ; a comedy for one of the great theatres, just ready ; a whole entertainment, by himself, for Matthews and Yates to figure in ; a meditated Comic Annual for next

year, to be nearly done by himself. You'd like him very much.

“Wordsworth, I see, has a good many pieces announced in one of the *Annals*, not our *Gem*. W. Scott has distributed himself like a bribe haunch among 'em. Of all the poets, Cary has had the good sense to keep quite clear of 'em, with gentle, manly, right notions. Don't think I set up for being proud on this point; I like a bit of flattery, tickling my vanity, as well as any one. But these pompous masquerades without masks (naked names or faces) I hate. So there's a bit of my mind. Besides, they infallibly cheat you, I mean the booksellers. If I get but a copy, I only expect it from Hood's being my friend. Coleridge has lately been here. He too is deep among the prophets, the year servers,—the mob of gentlemen *annals*. But they'll cheat him, I know. And now, dear B. B., the sun shining out merrily, and the dirty clouds we had yesterday having washed their own faces clean with their own rain, tempts me to wander up Winchmore Hill, or into some of the delightful vicinages of Enfield, which I hope to show you at some time when you can get a few days up to the great town. Believe

me it would give both of us great pleasure to show you our pleasant farms and villages.

“ We both join in kindest love to you and yours.

“ C. LAMB, *redivivus*.”

The following is of December, and closes the letters which remain of this year.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ Dec. 1828.

“ Dear B. B.—I am ashamed to receive so many nice books from you, and to have none to send you in return. You are always sending me some fruits or wholesome potherbs, and mine is the garden of the Sluggard, nothing but weeds, or scarce they. Nevertheless, if I knew how to transmit it, I would send you Blackwood's of this month, which contains a little drama, to have your opinion of it, and how far I have improved, or otherwise, upon its prototype. Thank you for your kind sonnet. It does me good to see the Dedication to a Christian Bishop. I am for a comprehension, as divines call it; but so as that the Church shall go a good deal more than half way over to the silent Meeting-house. I have

ever said that the Quakers are the only *professors* of Christianity, as I read it in the *Evangiles*; I say *professors*—marry, as to practice, with their gaudy hot types and poetical vanities, they are much as one with the sinful. Martin's Frontispiece is a very fine thing, let *C. L.* say what he please to the contrary. Of the Poems, I like them, as a volume, better than any of the preceding; particularly, 'Power and Gentleness'—'The Present'—'Lady Russell;' with the exception that I do not like the noble act of Curtius, true or false—one of the grand foundations of the old Roman patriotism—to be sacrificed to Lady R.'s taking notes on her husband's trial. If a thing is good, why invidiously bring it into comparison with something better? There are too few heroic things in this world, to admit of our marshalling them in anxious etiquettes of precedence. Would you make a poem on the story of Ruth, (pretty story!) and then say—Aye, but how much better is the story of 'Joseph and his Brethren!' To go on, the stanzas to 'Chalon' want the *name* of Clarkson in the body of them; it is left to inference. The 'Battle of Gibeon' is spirited, again. 'Godiva' is delicately touched. I have always thought it a beautiful story, characteristic

of the old English times. But I could not help amusing myself with the thought—if Martin had chosen this subject for a frontispiece—there would have been in some dark corner a white lady, white as the walker on the waves, riding upon some mystical quadruped; and high above would have risen tower above tower—‘a massy structure high’—the Tenterden steeples of Coventry, till the poor cross would scarce have known itself among the clouds; and, far above them all, the distant Clint hills peering over chimney pots, piled up, Olympus fashion, till the admiring spectator (admirer of a noble deed) might have gone look for the lady, as you must hunt for the other in the lobster. But M—— should be made royal architect. What palaces he would pile! But then, what parliamentary grants to make them good! Nevertheless, I like the frontispiece. The ‘Elephant’ is pleasant; and I am glad you are getting into a wider scope of subjects. There may be too much, not religion, but too many *good words* in a book, till it becomes a rhapsody of words. I will just name, that you have brought in the ‘Song to the Shepherds’ in four or five, if not six places. Now this is not good economy. The ‘Enoch’ is fine; and here I can sacrifice ‘Elijah’ to it, be-

cause 'tis illustrative only, and not disparaging of the latter prophet's departure. I like this best in the book. Lastly, I much like the 'Heron;' 'tis exquisite. Know you Lord Thurlow's Sonnet to a bird of that sort on Lacken water? If not, 'tis indispensable that I send it you, with my Blackwood. 'Fludyer' is pleasant,—you are getting gay and Hood-ish. What is the enigma?—Money? If not, I fairly confess I am foiled, and sphynx must *eat me*. Four times I have tried to write—eat me, and the blotting pen turns it into—cat me. And now I will take my leave with saying, I esteem thy verses, like thy present, honour thy frontispiece, and right reverence thy patron and dedication, and am, dear B. B.

“Yours heartily,

“C. LAMB.”

CHAPTER XVII.

[1829, 1830.]

LETTERS TO ROBINSON, PROCTER, BARTON, WILSON,
GILMAN, WORDSWORTH, AND DYER.

HAVING decided on residing entirely at Enfield, Lamb gave up Colebrook Cottage, and took what he described in a notelet to me as “an odd looking gambogish-coloured house,” at Chace-side, Enfield. The situation was far from picturesque, for the opposite side of the road only presented some middling tenements, two dissenting chapels, and a public-house decorated with a swinging sign of a Rising Sun ; but the neighbouring field walks were pleasant, and the country, as he liked to say, quite as good as Westmoreland.

He continued occasional contributions to the *New Monthly*, especially the series of “Popular Fallacies ;” wrote short articles in the *Athenæum* ;

and a great many acrostics on the names of his friends. He had now a neighbour in Mr. Sergeant Wilde, to whom he was introduced by Mr. Burney, and whom he held in high esteem, though Lamb cared nothing for forensic eloquence, and thought very little of eloquence of any kind, which it must be confessed, when printed, is the most vapid of all reading. What political interest could not excite, personal regard produced in favour of his new friend; and Lamb supplied several versified squibs and snatches of electioneering songs to grace Wilde's contests at Newark. With these slender avocations his life was dull, and only a sense of duty induced him to persist in absence from London.

The following letter was written in acknowledgment of a parcel sent to Miss Lamb, comprising (what she had expressed a wish to have) a copper coal-scoop, and a pair of elastic spectacles, accompanied by a copy of "Pamela," which having been borrowed and supposed to be lost, had been replaced by another in Lamb's library.

TO MR. H. C. ROBINSON.

"Dear R.,—Expectation was alert on the receipt of your strange-shaped present, while yet

undisclosed from its fusc envelope. Some said, 'tis a *viol da Gamba*, others pronounced it a fiddle; I, myself, hoped it a liqueur case, pregnant with *eau-de-vie* and such old nectar. When midwifed into daylight, the gossips were at a loss to pronounce upon its species. Most took it for a marrow-spoon, an apple-scoop, a banker's guinea-shovel; at length its true scope appeared, its drift, to save the back-bone of my sister stooping to scuttles. A philanthropic intent, borrowed, no doubt, from some of the colliers. You save people's backs one way, and break 'em again by loads of obligation. The spectacles are delicate and Vulcanian. No lighter texture than their steel did the cuckoldy blacksmith frame to catch Mrs. Vulcan and the Captain in. For ungalled forehead, as for back unbursten, you have Mary's thanks. Marry, for my own peculium of obligation, 'twas supererogatory. A second part of Pamela was enough in conscience. Two Pamelas in a house is too much, without two Mr. B.'s to reward 'em.

“ Mary, who is handselling her new aerial perspectives upon a pair of old worsted stockings trod out in Cheshunt lanes, sends her love. I, great

good-liking. Bid us a personal farewell before you see the Vatican.

“CHARLES LAMB.

“Enfield, Feb. 27, 1829.”

The following letter to his friend, who so prosperously combines conveyancing with poetry, is a fair sample of Lamb's elaborate and good-natured fictions. It is hardly necessary to say, that the reference to a coolness between him and two of his legal friends, is part of the fiction.

TO MR. PROCTER.

“My dear Procter,—I am ashamed not to have taken the drift of your pleasant letter, which I find to have been pure invention. But jokes are not suspected in Bœotian Enfield. We are plain people, and our talk is of corn, and cattle, and Waltham markets. Besides, I was a little out of sorts when I received it. The fact is, I am involved in a case which has fretted me to death, and I have no reliance except on you to extricate me. I am sure you will give me your best legal advice, having no professional friend besides, but Robinson and Talfourd, with neither of whom, at present, I am on the best of terms. My brother's

widow left a will, made during the life-time of my brother, in which I am named sole executor, by which she bequeaths forty acres of arable property, which it seems she held under covert baron, unknown to my brother, to the heirs of the body of Elizabeth Dowden, her married daughter by a first husband, in fee simple, recoverable by fine; invested property, mind, for there is the difficulty; subject to leet and quit rent; in short, worded in the most guarded terms, to shut out the property from Isaac Dowden, the husband. Intelligence has just come of the death of this person in India, where he made a will, entailing this property (which seemed entangled enough already) to the heirs of his body, that should not be born of his wife, for it seems by the law in India, natural children can recover. They have put the cause into Exchequer process here, removed by *certiorari* from the native courts; and the question is, whether I should, as executor, try the cause here, or again re-remove it to the Supreme Sessions at Bangalore, which I understand I can, or plead a hearing before the Privy Council here. As it involves all the little property of Elizabeth Dowden, I am anxious to take the fittest steps, and what may be least expensive. For God's sake assist me, for the case is

so embarrassed that it deprives me of sleep and appetite. M. Burney thinks there is a case like it in chap. 170, sec. 5, in 'Fearn's Contingent Remainders.' Pray read it over with him dispassionately, and let me have the result. The complexity lies in the questionable power of the husband to alienate in usum; enfeoffments whereof he was only collaterally seised, &c.

"I had another favour to beg, which is the beggarliest of beggings. A few lines of verse for a young friend's album, (six will be enough.) M. Burney will tell you who she is I want 'em for. A girl of gold. Six lines—make 'em eight—signed Barry C——. They need not be very good, as I chiefly want 'em as a foil to mine. But I shall be seriously obliged by any refuse scrap. We are in the last ages of the world, when St. Paul prophesied that women should be 'headstrong, lovers of their own wills, having albums.' I fled hither to escape the albumean persecution, and had not been in my new house twenty-four hours, when the daughter of the next house came in with a friend's album to beg a contribution, and the following day intimated she had one of her own. Two more have sprung up since. If I take the wings of the morning and fly unto the uttermost parts of the earth, there will

albums be. New Holland has albums. But the age is to be complied with. M. B. will tell you the sort of girl I request the ten lines for. Somewhat of a pensive cast, what you admire. The lines may come before the law question, as that cannot be determined before Hilary Term, and I wish your deliberate judgment on that. The other may be flimsy and superficial. And if you have not burnt your returned letter, pray resend it me, as a monumental token of my stupidity."

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Lamb was as unfortunate in his communications with the annuals, as unhappy in the importunities of the fair owners of albums. His favourite pieces were omitted; and a piece not his, called "The Widow," was, by a license of friendship, which Lamb forgave, inserted in one of them. He thus complains of these grievances in a letter which he wrote on the marriage of the daughter of a friend to a great theoretical chemist.

TO MR. PROCTER.

"Rumour tells us that Miss ——— is married. Who is ———? I hear he is a great chemist. I am sometimes chemical myself. A thought strikes me

with horror. Pray heaven he may not have done it for the sake of trying chemical experiments upon her,—young female subjects are so scarce. An't you glad about Burke's case? We may set off the Scotch murders against the Scotch novels. Hare, the Great Unchanged.

“ M. B. is richly worth your knowing. He is on the top scale of my friendship ladder, on which an angel or two is still climbing, and some, alas! descending. Did you see a sonnet of mine in Blackwood's last? Curious construction! Elaborata facilitas! And now I'll tell. 'Twas written for 'The Gem,' but the editors declined it, on the plea that it would *shock all mothers*; so they published 'The Widow' instead. I am born out of time. I have no conjecture about what the present world calls delicacy. I thought 'Rosamund Gray' was a pretty modest thing. Hessey assures me that the world would not bear it. I have lived to grow into an indecent character. When my sonnet was rejected, I exclaimed, 'Hang the age, I will write for antiquity!'

“ *Erratum* in sonnet.—Last line but something, for tender, read tend. The Scotch do not know our law terms; but I find some remains of honest, plain, old writing lurking there still. They were

not so mealy-mouth'd as to refuse my verses.
Maybe 'tis their oatmeal.

“ Blackwood sent me £— for the drama. Somebody cheated me out of it next day; and my new pair of breeches, just sent home, cracking at first putting on, I exclaimed, ‘All tailors are cheats, and all men are tailors.’ Then I was better.”

The next contains Lamb's thanks for the verses he had begged for Miss Isola's album. They comprehended a compliment turning on the words *Isola Bella*.

TO MR. PROCTER.

“ The comings in of an incipient conveyancer are not adequate to the receipt of three two-penny post non-paids in a week. Therefore, after this, I condemn my pen to long and deep silence, or shall awaken it to write to lords. Lest those raptures in this honey-moon of my correspondence you avow for the visitations of my Nuncio, after passing through certain natural grades, as Love, Love and Water, Love with the chill off, then subsiding to that point which the heroic suitor of his wedded dame, the noble-spirited Lord Randolph in the play, declares to be the ambition of his passion, a reciprocation of ‘complacent kindness,’—

it suddenly plump down (scarce staying to bait at the mid point of indifference, so hungry it is for distaste) to a loathing and blank aversion, to the rendering probable such counter expressions as this,—‘Hang that infernal two-penny postman,’ (words which make the messenger ‘lift up his hands and wonder who can use them.’) While, then, you are not ruined, let me assure thee, O thou above the painter, and next only under Giraldus Cambrensis, the most immortal and worthy to be immortal Barry, thy most ingenious and golden cadences do take my fancy mightily. But tell me, and tell me truly, gentle swain, is that Isola Bella a true spot in geographical denomination, or a floating Delos in thy brain. Lurks that fair island in verity in the bosom of Lake Maggiore, or some other with less poetic name, which thou hast Cornwallized for the occasion. And what if Maggiore itself be but a coinage of adaptation? Of this, pray resolve me immediately, for my albumess will be catechised on this subject; and how can I prompt her? Lake Leman I know, and Lemon Lake (in a punch bowl) I have swum in, though those lymphs be long since dry. But Maggiore may be in the moon. Unsphinx this riddle for me, for my shelves have no gazetteer.”

The following letters contain a noble instance of Lamb's fine consideration, and exquisite feeling in morality.

TO MR. PROCTER.

“ When Miss ——— was at Enfield, which she was in summer-time, and owed her health to its sun and genial influences, she visited (with young lady-like impertinence) a poor man's cottage that had a pretty baby (O the yearning !), gave it fine caps and sweetmeats. On a day, broke into the parlour our two maids uproarious, ‘ O ma'am, who do you think Miss ——— has been working a cap for.’ ‘ A child,’ answered Mary, in true Shandean female simplicity. ‘ It's the man's child as was taken up for sheep stealing.’ Miss ——— was staggered, and would have cut the connexion, but by main force I made her go and take her leave of her protégée. I thought, if she went no more, the Abactor or Abactor's wife (vide Ainsworth) would suppose she had heard something; and I have delicacy for a sheep-stealer. The overseers actually overhauled a mutton-pie at the baker's (his first, last, and only hope of mutton-pie), which he never came to eat, and thence inferred his guilt. Per occasionem cujus, I framed the sonnet; observe its elaborate construction. I was four days about it.

‘THE GIPSY’S MALISON.

“Suck, baby, suck! mother’s love grows by giving,
 Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting;
 Black manhood comes, when riotous guilty living
 Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.
 Kiss, baby, kiss! mother’s lips shine by kisses,
 Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings;
 Black manhood comes, when turbulent guilty blisses
 Tend thee the kiss that poisons ’mid caressings.
 Hang, baby, hang! mother’s love loves such forecs,
 Strain the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging;
 Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses
 Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging.”
 So sang a wither’d Beldam energetical,
 And bann’d the ungiving door with lips prophetical.’

Barry, study that sonnet. It is curiously and perversely elaborate. ’Tis a choking subject, and therefore the reader is directed to the structure of it. See you? and was this a fourteener to be rejected by a trumpery annual? forsooth, ’twould shock all mothers; and may all mothers, who would so be shock’d, be hanged! as if mothers were such sort of logicians as to infer the future hanging of *their* child from the theoretical hangibility (or capacity of being hanged, if the judge pleases) of every infant born with a neck on. Oh B. C. my whole heart is faint, and my whole head is sick (how is it?) at this cursed, canting, unmasculine age!”

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There is a little Latin letter about the same time to the same friend.

TO MR. PROCTER.

“Facundissime Poeta ! quanquam istiusmodi epitheta oratoribus potiùs quam poetis attinere faciliè scio—tamen, facundissime !

“Commoratur nobiscum jamdiu, in agro Enfeldiense, scilicet, leguleius futurus, illustrissimus Martinus Burncius, otium agens, negotia nominalia, et officinam clientum vacuum, paululum fugiens. Orat, implorat te—nempe, Martinus—ut si (quòd Dii faciant) fortè fortunâ, absente ipso, advenerit tardus cliens, eum certiolem feceris per literas hûc missas. Intelligisne ? an me Anglicè et barbaricè ad te hominem perdoctum scribere oportet ?

“C. AGNUS.

“Si status de franco tenemento datur avo, et in eodem facto si mediate vel immediate datur *hæredibus vel hæredibus corporis dicti avi*, postrema hæc verba sunt Limitationis non Perquisitionis.

“Dixi.

“CARLAGNULUS.”

An allusion to Rogers, worthy of both, occurs in a letter

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“June 3, 1829.

“Dear B. B.,—to get out of home themes, have you seen Southey’s ‘Dialogues ?’ His lake descriptions, and the account of his library at Kes-

wick, are very fine. But he needed not have called up the ghost of More to hold the conversations with; which might as well have passed between A. and B., or Caius and Lucius. It is making too free with a defunct Chancellor and Martyr.

“I feel as if I had nothing farther to write about. O! I forgot; the prettiest letter I ever read, that I have received from ‘Pleasures of Memory’ Rogers, in acknowledgment of a sonnet I sent him on the loss of his brother.

“It is too long to transcribe, but I hope to show it you some day, as I hope sometime again to see you, when all of us are well. Only it ends thus, ‘We were nearly of an age (he was the elder); he was the only person in the world in whose eyes I always appeared young.’”

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What a lesson does the following read to us from one who, while condemned to uninteresting industry, thought happiness consisted in an affluence of time!

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“Enfield Chace-side, Saturday, 25th July,
A. D. 1829, 11 A. M.

“There—a fuller, plumper, juicier date never dropt from Idumean palm. Am I in the date-ive

case now? if not, a fig for dates, which is more than a date is worth. I never stood much affected to those liminary specialities. Least of all, since the date of my superannuation.

What have I with time to do?

Slaves of desks, 'twas meant for you.

But town, with all my native hankering after it, is not what it was. The streets, the shops are left, but all old friends are gone. And in London I was frightfully convinced of this as I passed houses and places, empty caskets now. I have ceased to care almost about any body. The bodies I cared for are in graves, or dispersed. My old chums, that lived so long, and flourished so steadily, are crumbled away. When I took leave of our adopted young friend at Charing Cross, 'twas a heavy unfeeling rain, and I had no where to go. Home have I none, and not a sympathising house to turn to in the great city. Never did the waters of heaven pour down on a forlorn head. Yet I tried ten days at a sort of friend's house, but it was large and straggling,—one of the individuals of my old long knot of friends, card-players, pleasant companions, that have tumbled to pieces, into dust and other things; and I got home on Thursday, convinced that it was better to get home to my

hole at Enfield, and hide like a sick cat in my corner. And to make me more alone, our ill-tempered maid is gone, who, with all her airs, was yet a home-piece of furniture, a record of better days; and the young thing that has succeeded her is good and attentive, but she is nothing. And I have no one here to talk over old matters with. *Scolding and quarreling have something of familiarity, and a community of interest; they imply acquaintance; they are of one sentiment, which is of the family of dearness.*

“ I can neither scold at nor quarrel at this insignificant implement of household services; she is less than a cat, and just better than a deal dresser. What I can do, and over-do, is to walk; but deadly long are the days, these summer all-day-days, with but a half hour’s candle-light, and no fire-light. I do not write, tell your kind inquisitive Eliza, and can hardly read. ’Tis cold work authorship, without something to puff one into fashion. Could you not write something on Quakerism, for Quakers to read, but nominally addressed to Non-Quakers, explaining your dogmas, as waiting on the Spirit, by the analogy of human calmness, and waiting on the judgement? I scarcely know what I mean, but to make Non-

Quakers reconciled to your doctrines, by showing something like them in mere human operations; but I hardly understand myself, so let it pass for nothing. I assure you, *no work* is worse than *over work*. The mind preys on itself, the most unwholesome food. I bragged formerly that I could not have too much time. I have a surfeit; with few years to come, the days are wearisome. But weariness is not eternal. Something will shine out to take the load off that crushes me, which is at present intolerable. I have killed an hour or two in this poor scrawl. I am a sanguinary murderer of time, and would kill him inchmeal just now. But the snake is vital. Well; I shall write merrier anon. 'Tis the present copy of my countenance I send, and to complain is a little to alleviate. May you enjoy yourself as far as the wicked world will let you, and think that you are not quite alone, as I am! Health to Lucia, and to Anna, and kind remembrances.

“ Your forlorn

“ C. L.”

The cares of housekeeping pressed too heavily on Miss Lamb, and her brother resolved to resign the dignity of a housekeeper for the independence

of a lodger. A couple of old dwellers in Enfield, hard by his cottage, had the good fortune to receive them. Lamb refers to the change in the following letter, acknowledging the receipt of Wilson's 'Life of De Foe,' in which a criticism from his pen was inserted, embodying the sentiments which he had expressed some years before.

TO MR. WALTER WILSON.

" Enfield, 15th November, 1829.

" My dear Wilson,—I have not opened a packet of unknown contents for many years that gave me so much pleasure as when I disclosed your three volumes. I have given them a careful perusal, and they have taken their degree of classical books upon my shelves. De Foe was always my darling, but, what darkness was I in as to far the larger part of his writings ! I have now an epitome of them all. I think the way in which you have done the 'Life' the most judicious you could have pitched upon. You have made him tell his own story, and your comments are in keeping with the tale. Why, I never heard of such a work as 'the Review.' Strange that in my stall-hunting days I never so much as lit upon an odd volume of it.

This circumstance looks as if they were never of any great circulation. But I may have met with 'em, and not knowing the prize, overpast 'em. I was almost a stranger to the whole history of Dissenters in those reigns, and picked my way through that strange book the 'Consolidator' at random. How affecting are some of his personal appeals: what a machine of projects he set on foot, and following writers have picked his pocket of the patents! I do not understand whereabouts in Roxana he himself left off. I always thought the complete-tourist-sort of description of the town she passes through on her last embarkation miserably unseasonable, and out of place. I knew not they were spurious. Enlighten me as to where the apocryphal matter commences. I, by accident, can correct one A. D., 'Family Instructor,' vol. ii. 1718; you say his first volume had then reached the fourth edition; now I have a fifth, printed for Eman Matthews, 1717. So have I plucked one rotten date, or rather picked it up where it had inadvertently fallen, from your flourishing date tree, the Palm of Engaddi. I may take it for my pains. I think yours a book which every public library must have, and every English scholar should have. I am sure it has enriched my meagre stock

of the author's works. I seem to be twice as opulent. Mary is by my side just finishing the second volume. It must have interest to divert her away so long from her modern novels. Colburn will be quite jealous. I was a little disappointed at my 'Ode to the Treadmill' not finding a place, but it came out of time. The two papers of mine will puzzle the reader, being so akin. Odd, that never keeping a scrap of my own letters, with some fifteen years' interval I should nearly have said the same things. But I shall always feel happy in having my name go down any how with De Foe's, and that of his historiographer. I promise myself, if not immortality, yet diuturnity of being read in consequence. We have both had much illness this year; and feeling infirmities and fretfulness grow upon us, we have cast off the cares of housekeeping, sold off our goods, and commenced boarding and lodging with a very comfortable old couple next door to where you found us. We use a sort of common table. Nevertheless, we have reserved a private one for an old friend; and when Mrs. Wilson and you revisit Babylon, we shall pray you to make it yours for a season. Our very kindest remembrances to you both.

“ From your old friend and *fellow-journalist*, now in *two instances*,

“ C. LAMB.

“ Hazlitt is going to make your book a basis for a review of De Foe's Novels in ‘the Edinbro.’ I wish I had health and spirits to do it. Hone I have not seen, but I doubt not he will be much pleased with your performance. I very much hope you will give us an account of Dunton, &c. But what I should more like to see would be a life and times of Bunyan. Wishing health to you, and long life to your healthy book, again I subscribe me,

“ Yours in verity,

“ C. L.”

About the same time, the following letter was written, alluding to the same change.

TO MR. GILMAN.

“ Dear Gilman,—Allsop brought me your kind message yesterday. How can I account for having not visited Highgate this long time? Change of place seemed to have changed me. How grieved I was to hear in what indifferent health Coleridge has been, and I not to know of it! A little school

divinity, well applied, may be healing. I send him honest Tom of Aquin; that was always an obscure great idea to me; I never thought or dreamed to see him in the flesh, but t'other day I rescued him from a stall in Barbican, and brought him off in triumph. He comes to greet Coleridge's acceptance, for his shoe-latchets I am unworthy to unloose. Yet there are pretty pro's and con's, and such unsatisfactory learning in him. Commend me to the question of etiquette—'*utrum annunciatio debuerit fieri per angelum*'—*Quæst.* 30, *Articulus* 2. I protest, till now I had thought Gabriel a fellow of some mark and likelihood, not a simple esquire, as I find him. Well, do not break your lay brains, nor I neither, with these curious nothings. They are nuts to our dear friend, whom hoping to see at your first friendly hint that it will be convenient, I end with begging our very kindest loves to Mrs. Gilman. We have had a sorry house of it here. Our spirits have been reduced till we were at hope's end what to do. Obligated to quit this house, and afraid to engage another, till in extremity, I took the desperate resolve of kicking house and all down, like Bunyan's pack; and here we are in a new life at board and lodging, with an honest couple our neighbours.

We have ridded ourselves of the cares of dirty acres; and the change, though of less than a week, has had the most beneficial effects on Mary already. She looks two years and a half younger for it. But we have had sore trials.

“God send us one happy meeting!—Yours faithfully,

“C. LAMB.

“Chace-side, Enfield, 26th Oct. 1829.”

The first result of the experiment was happy, as it brought improved health to Miss Lamb; to which Lamb refers in the following letter to his Suffolk friend, who had announced to him his appointment as assignee under a bankruptcy.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“December 8th, 1829.

“My dear B. B.,—You are very good to have been uneasy about us, and I have the satisfaction to tell you, that we are both in better health and spirits than we have been for a year or two past. The cause may not appear quite adequate, when I tell you, that a course of ill health and spirits brought us to the determination of giving up our house here, and we are boarding and lodging with a worthy old couple, long inhabitants of Enfield,

where every thing is done for us without our trouble, further than a reasonable weekly payment. We should have done so before, but it is not easy to flesh and blood to give up an ancient establishment, to discard old Penates, and from house-keepers to turn house-sharers. (N.B. We are not in the workhouse.) Diocletian, in his garden, found more repose than on the imperial seat of Rome ; and the nob of Charles V. ached seldomer under a monk's cowl than under the diadem. With such shadows of assimilation we countenance our degradation. With such a load of dignified cares just removed from our shoulders, we can the more understand and pity the accession to yours, by the advancement to an assigneeship. I will tell you honestly, B. B., that it has been long my deliberate judgment that all bankrupts, of what denomination, civil or religious, soever, ought to be hanged. The pity of mankind has for ages run in a wrong direction, and been diverted from poor creditors —(how many have I known sufferers ! Hazlitt has just been defrauded of £100 by his bookseller friends breaking)—to scoundrel debtors. I know all the topics,—that distress may overtake an honest man without his fault ; that the failure of one that he trusted was his calamity, &c. Then let *both* be

hanged. O how careful this would make traders ! These are my deliberate thoughts, after many years' experience in matters of trade. * * Trade will never flourish in this land till such a law is established. I write big, not to save ink but eyes, mine having been troubled with reading through three folios of old Fuller in almost as few days, and I went to bed last night in agony, and am writing with a vial of eyewater before me, alternately dipping in vial and inkstand. This may inflame my zeal against bankrupts, but it was my speculation when I could see better. Half the world's misery (Eden else) is owing to want of money, and all that want is owing to bankrupts. I declare I would, if the state wanted practitioners, turn hangman myself, and should have great pleasure in hanging the first after my salutary law should be established. I have seen no annuals, and wish to see none. I like your fun upon them, and was quite pleased with Bowles's sonnet. Hood is, or was, at Brighton ; but a note (prose or rhyme) to him, Robert-street, Adelphi, I am sure, would extract a copy of *his*, which also I have not seen.

“Wishing you and yours all health, I conclude while these frail glasses are, to me, eyes,

“C. L.”

The following letter, written in the beginning of 1830, describes his landlord and landlady, and expresses, with a fine solemnity, the feelings which still held him at Enfield.

TO MR. WORDSWORTH.

“ And is it a year since we parted from you at the steps of Edmonton stage? There are not now the years that there used to be. The tale of the dwindled age of men, reported of successional mankind, is true of the same man only. We do not live a year in a year now. 'Tis a *punctum stans*. The seasons pass with indifference. Spring cheers not, nor winter heightens our gloom; autumn hath foregone its moralities,—they are ‘hey-pass re-pass,’ as in a show-box. Yet, as far as last year recurs,—for they scarce show a reflex now, they make no memory as heretofore,—’twas sufficiently gloomy. Let the sullen nothing pass. Suffice it, that after sad spirits, prolonged through many of its months, as it called them, we have cast our skins; have taken a farewell of the pompous, troublesome trifle, called housekeeping, and are settled down into poor boarders and lodgers at next door with an old couple, the Baucis and Baucida of dull En-

field. Here we have nothing to do with our victuals but to eat them ; with the garden but to see it grow ; with the tax-gatherer but to hear him knock ; with the maid but to hear her scolded. Scot and lot, butcher, baker, are things unknown to us, save as spectators of the pageant. We are fed we know not how ; quietists,—confiding ravens. We have the *otium pro dignitate*, a respectable insignificance. Yet in the self-condemned obliviousness, in the stagnation, some molesting yearnings of life, not quite killed, rise, prompting me that there was a London, and that I was of that old Jerusalem. In dreams I am in Fleet Market, but I wake and cry to sleep again. I die hard, a stubborn Eloisa in this detestable Paraclete. What have I gained by health ? Intolerable dullness. What by early hours and moderate meals ? A total blank. O ! never let the lying poets be believed, who 'tice men from the cheerful haunts of streets, or think they mean it not of a country village. In the ruins of Palmyra I would gird myself up to solitude, or muse to the snoring of the Seven Sleepers ; but to have a little teasing image of a town about one ; country folks that do not look like country folks ; shops two yards square, half a dozen apples and two penn'orth of overlooked ginger-

bread for the lofty fruiterers of Oxford-street; and, for the immortal book and print stalls, a circulating library that stands still, where the show-picture is a last year's Valentine, and whither the fame of the last ten Scotch novels has not yet travelled,—(marry, they just begin to be conscious of Red-gauntlet;) to have a new plastered flat church, and to be wishing that it was but a cathedral! The very blackguards here are degenerate; the topping gentry stock-brokers; the passengers too many to insure your quiet, or let you go about whistling or gaping, too few to be the fine indifferent pageants of Fleet-street. Confining, room-keeping, thickest winter, is yet more bearable here than the gaudy months. Among one's books at one's fire by candle, one is soothed into an oblivion that one is not in the country; but with the light the green fields return, till I gaze, and in a calenture can plunge myself into St. Giles's. O! let no native Londoner imagine that health, and rest, and innocent occupation, interchange of converse sweet, and recreative study, can make the country any thing better than altogether odious and detestable. A garden was the primitive prison, till man, with Promethean felicity and boldness, luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followed Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, Lon-

don, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns,—these all came in on the town part, and the thither side of innocence. Man found out inventions. From my den I return you condolence for your decaying sight; not for any thing there is to see in the country, but for the miss of the pleasure of reading a London newspaper. The poets are as well to listen to; any thing high may, nay must, be read out; you read it to yourself with an imaginary auditor; but the light paragraphs must be glid over by the proper eye; mouthing mumbles their gossamery substance. 'Tis these trifles I should mourn in fading sight. A newspaper is the single gleam of comfort I receive here; it comes from rich Cathay with tidings of mankind. Yet I could not attend to it, read out by the most beloved voice. But your eyes do not get worse, I gather. O for the collyrium of Tobias inclosed in a whiting's liver, to send you with no apocryphal good wishes! The last long time I heard from you, you had knocked your head against something. Do not do so; for your head (I do not flatter) is not a nob, or the top of a brass nail, or the end of a nine-pin,—unless a Vulcanian hammer could fairly batter a 'Recluse' out of it; then would I bid the smirch'd god knock

and knock lustily, the two-handed skinker. Mary must squeeze out a line *propria manu*, but indeed her fingers have been incorrigibly nervous to letter writing for a long interval. 'Twill please you all to hear, that though I fret like a lion in a net, her present health and spirits are better than they have been for some time past; she is absolutely three years and a half younger, as I tell her, since we have adopted this boarding plan.

"Our providers are an honest pair, Dame W—— and her husband; he, when the light of prosperity shined on them, a moderately thriving haberdasher within Bow bells, retired since with something under a competence; writes himself gentleman; hath borne parish offices; sings fine old sea songs at threescore and ten; sighs only now and then when he thinks that he has a son on his hands about fifteen, whom he finds a difficulty in getting out into the world, and then checks a sigh with muttering, as I once heard him prettily, not meaning to be heard, 'I have married my daughter, however;' takes the weather as it comes; outsides it to town in severest season; and o' winter nights tells old stories not tending to literature, (how comfortable to author-rid folks!) and has *one anecdote*,

upon which and about forty pounds a year he seems to have retired in green old age. It was how he was a rider in his youth, travelling for shops, and once (not to balk his employer's bargain) on a sweltering day in August, rode foaming into Dunstable upon a mad horse, to the dismay and expostulatory wonderment of inn-keepers, ostlers, &c., who declared they would not have bestrid the beast to win the Derby. Understand, the creature galled to death and desperation by gad-flies, cormorant-winged, worse than beset Inachus' daughter. This he tells, this he brindles and burnishes on a winter's eve; 'tis his star of set glory, his rejuveniscence, to descant upon. Far from me be it (*dii avertant*) to look a gift story in the mouth, or cruelly to surmise (as those who doubt the plunge of Curtius) that the inseparate conjuncture of man and beast, the centaur-phenomenon that staggered all Dunstable, might have been the effect of unromantic necessity; that the horse-part carried the reasoning, willy nilly; that needs must when such a devil drove; that certain spiral configurations in the frame of T—— W—— unfriendly to alighting, made the alliance more forcible than voluntary. Let him enjoy his fame for me, nor let me hint a whisper that shall dismount Belle-

rophon. But in case he was an involuntary martyr, yet if in the fiery conflict he buckled the soul of a constant haberdasher to him, and adopted his flames, let accident and he share the glory. You would all like 'T—— W——. *[] How weak is painting to describe a man! Say that he stands four feet and a nail high by his own yard measure, which, like the sceptre of Agamemnon, shall never sprout again, still you have no adequate idea; nor when I tell you that his dear hump, which I have favoured in the picture, seems to me of the buffalo—indicative and repository of mild qualities, a budget of kindnesses—still you have not the man. Knew you old Norris of the Temple? sixty years ours and our fathers' friend? He was not more natural to us than this old W., the acquaintance of scarce more weeks. Under his roof now ought I to take my rest, but that back-looking ambition tells me I might yet be a Londoner! Well, if we ever do move, we have incumbrances the less to impede us; all our furniture has faded under the auctioneer's hammer, going for nothing like the tarnished frippery of the

* Here was a rude sketch of a gentleman answering to the description.

prodigal, and we have only a spoon or two left to bless us. Clothed we came into Enfield, and naked we must go out of it. I would live in London shirtless, bookless. Henry Crabb is at Rome; advices to that effect have reached Bury. But by solemn legacy he bequeathed at parting (whether he should live or die) a turkey of Suffolk to be sent every succeeding Christmas to us and divers other friends. What a genuine old bachelor's action ! I fear he will find the air of Italy too classic. His station is in the Harz forest ; his soul is be-Göethed. Miss Kelly we never see ; Talfourd not this half year : the latter flourishes, but the exact number of his children, God forgive me, I have utterly forgotten ; we single people are often out in our count there. Shall I say two ? We see scarce any body. Can I cram loves enough to you all in this little O ? Excuse particularising.

“C. L.”

A letter which, addressed to Mr. Gilman, was intended both for him and his great guest Coleridge, gives another version of the same character. “One anecdote” of T—— W—— is repeated in it, with the substitution of Devizes for Dunstable.

Which is the veritable place, must remain a curious question for future descant, as the hero is dead, and his anecdote survives alone in these pages. It seems that Miss Lamb had accompanied his landlord on a little excursion.

TO MR. GILMAN.

“Dear G.,—The excursionists reached home, and the good town of Enfield, a little after four, without slip or dislocation. Little has transpired concerning the events of the back journey, save that of passing the house of 'Squire Mellish, situate a stone bow's cast from the hamlet. Father W——, with a good-natured wonderment, exclaimed, ‘I cannot think what is gone of Mr. Mellish's rooks. I fancy they have taken flight somewhere, but I have missed them two or three years past.’ All this while, according to his fellow traveller's report, the rookery was darkening the air above with undiminished population, and deafening all ears but his with their cawings. But nature has been gently withdrawing such phenomena from the notice of two of T—— W——'s senses, from the time he began to miss the rooks. T. W—— has passed a retired life in this hamlet,

of thirty or forty years, living upon the minimum which is consistent with gentility, yet a star among the minor gentry, receiving the bows of the tradespeople, and courtesies of the alms' women, daily. Children venerate him not less for his external show of gentry, than they wonder at him for a gentle rising endorsation of the person, not amounting to a hump, or if a hump, innocuous as the hump of the buffalo, and coronative of as mild qualities. 'Tis a throne on which patience seems to sit—the proud perch of a self-respecting humility, stooping with condescension. Thereupon the cares of life have sate, and rid him easily. For he has thridd the *angustiæ domûs* with dexterity. Life opened upon him with comparative brilliancy. He set out a rider or traveller for a wholesale house, in which capacity he tells of many hair-breadth escapes that befel him; one especially, how he rode a mad horse into the town of Devizes; how horse and rider arrived in a foam, to the utter consternation of the expostulating hostlers, innkeepers, &c. It seems it was sultry weather, piping hot; the steed tormented into frenzy with gad-flies, long past being roadworthy; but safety and the interest of the house he rode for were incompatible things; a fall in serge cloth was expected, and a mad entrance

they made of it. Whether the exploit was purely voluntary, or partially; or whether a certain personal defiguration in the man-part of this extraordinary centaur (non-assistive to partition of natures) might not enforce the conjunction, I stand not to enquire. I look not with 'skew eyes into the deeds of heroes. The hosier that was burnt with his shop in Field-lane, on Tuesday night, shall have past to heaven for me like a Marian Martyr, provided always, that he consecrated the fortuitous incremation with a short ejaculation in the exit, as much as if he had taken his state degrees of martyrdom *in formâ* in the market vicinage. There is adoptive as well as acquisitive sacrifice. Be the animus what it might, the fact is indisputable, that this composition was seen flying all abroad, and mine host of Daintry may yet remember its passing through his town, if his scores are not more faithful than his memory. After this exploit (enough for one man), T—— W—— seems to have subsided into a less hazardous occupation; and in the twenty-fifth year of his age, we find him a haberdasher in Bow-lane; yet still retentive of his early riding (though leaving it to rawer stomachs), and Christmasly at night sithence to this last, and to his latest Christmas, hath

he, doth he, and shall he, tell after supper the story of the insane steed and the desperate rider. Save for Bedlam or Luke's no eye could have guessed that melting day what house he rid for. But he reposes on his bridles, and after the ups and downs (metaphoric only) of a life behind the counter—hard riding sometimes, I fear, for poor T. W.—with the scrapings together of the shop, and *one anecdote*, he hath finally settled at Enfield; by hard economising, gardening, building for himself, hath reared a mansion; married a daughter; qualified a son for a counting-house; gotten the respect of high and low; served for self or substitute the greater parish offices; hath a special voice at vestries; and, domiciliating us, hath reflected a portion of his house-keeping respectability upon your humble servants. We are greater, being his lodgers, than when we were substantial renters. His name is a passport to take off the sneers of the native Enfielders against obnoxious foreigners. We are endenized. Thus much of T. W—— have I thought fit to acquaint you, that you may see the exemplary reliance upon Providence with which I entrusted so dear a charge as my own sister to the guidance of the man that rode the mad horse into Devizes. To come from his heroic

character, all the amiable qualities of domestic life concentre in this tamed Bellerophon. He is excellent over a glass of grog; just as pleasant without it; laughs when he hears a joke, and when (which is much oftener) he hears it not; sings glorious old sea songs on festival nights; and but upon a slight acquaintance of two years, Coleridge, is as dear a deaf old man to us, as old Norris, rest his soul! was after fifty. To him and his scanty literature (what there is of it, *sound*) have we flown from the metropolis and its cursed annualists, reviewers, authors, and the whole muddy ink press of that stagnant pool.

“Now, Gilman again, you do not know the treasure of the Fullers. I calculate on having massy reading till Christmas. All I want here, is books of the true sort, not those things in boards that moderns mistake for books, what they club for at book clubs.

“I did not mean to cheat you with a blank side, but my eye smarts, for which I am taking medicine, and abstain, this day at least, from any aliments but milk porridge, the innocent taste of which I am anxious to renew after a half century’s disac-

quaintance. If a blot fall here like a tear, it is not pathos, but an angry eye.

“Farewell, while my *specilla* are sound,

“Yours, and yours,

“C. LAMB.”

The next letter to Coleridge's excellent host, is a reply to a request from an importunate friend of his correspondent, that he would write something on behalf of the Spitalfields' weavers. Alien as such a task would have been to his habits of thought or composition, if Lamb had been acquainted with that singular race, living in their high, narrow, over-peopled houses, in the thickest part of London, yet almost apart from the great throng of its dwellers; indulging their straitened sympathies in the fostering of the more tender animals, as rabbits and pigeons, nurtured in their garrets or cellars; or cultivating some stunted plants with an intuitive love of nature, unfed by any knowledge of verdure beyond Hoxton; their painful industry, their uneducated morals, their eager snatches of pleasure from the only quickening of their intellect, by liquors, which make glad the heart of man; he would scarcely have refused the offered retainer for them.

TO MR. GILMAN.

“ My dear G.,—Your friend B—— (for I knew him immediately by the smooth satinity of his style) must excuse me for advocating the cause of his friends in Spitalfields. ‘The fact is, I am retained by the Norwich people, and have already appeared in their paper under the signatures of ‘Lucius Sergius,’ ‘Bluff,’ ‘Broad-Cloth,’ ‘No-Trade-to-the-Woollen-Trade,’ ‘Anti-Plush,’ &c., in defence of druggets and long camblets. And without this pre-engagement, I feel I should naturally have chosen a side opposite to ———, for in the silken seemingness of his nature there is that which offends me. My flesh tingles at such caterpillars. He shall not crawl me over. Let him and his workmen sing the old burthen,

‘Heigh ho, ye weavers!’

for any aid I shall offer them in this emergency. I was over Saint Luke’s the other day with my friend Tuthill, and mightily pleased with one of his contrivances for the comfort and amelioration of the students. ‘They have double cells, in which a pair may lie feet to feet horizontally, and chat the

time away as rationally as they can. It must certainly be more sociable for them these warm raving nights. The right-hand truckle in one of these friendly recesses, at present vacant, was preparing, I understood, for Mr. Irving. Poor fellow ! it is time he removed from Pentonville. I followed him as far as to Highbury the other day, with a mob at his heels, calling out upon Ermigiddon, who I suppose is some Scotch moderator. He squinted out his favourite eye last Friday, in the fury of possession, upon a poor woman's shoulders that was crying matches, and has not missed it. The companion truck, as far as I could measure it with my eye, would conveniently fit a person about the length of Coleridge, allowing for a reasonable drawing up of the feet, not at all painful. Does he talk of moving this quarter ? You and I have too much sense to trouble ourselves with revelations ; marry, to the same in Greek, you may have something professionally to say. Tell C. that he was to come and see us some fine day. Let it be before he moves, for in his new quarters he will necessarily be confined in his conversation to his brother prophet. Conceive the two Rabbis foot to foot, for there are no Gamaliels there to affect a humbler posture ! All are masters in that Pat-

mos, where the law is perfect equality ; Latmos, I should rather say, for they will be Luna's twin darlings ; her affection will be ever at the full. Well ; keep *your* brains moist with gooseberry this mad March, for the devil of exposition seeketh dry places.

“ C. L.”

Here is a brief reply to the questioning of Lamb's true-hearted correspondent, Barton, who doubted of the personal verity of Lamb's “ Joseph Paice,” the most polite of the old Templars. This friend's personal acquaintance with Lamb had not been frequent enough to teach him, that if Lamb could innocently “ lie like truth,” he made up for this freedom, by sometimes making truth look like a lie. His account of Mr. Paice's politeness, could be attested to the letter by living witnesses.

TO BERNARD BARTON.

“ Dear B. B.—To reply to you by return of post, I must gobble up my dinner, and despatch this in *propriâ personâ* to the office, to be in time. So take it from me hastily, that you are perfectly welcome to furnish A. C. with the scrap, which I

had almost forgotten writing. The more my character comes to be known, the less my veracity will come to be suspected. Time every day clears up some suspected narrative of Herodotus, Bruce, and others of us great travellers. Why, that Joseph Paice was as real a person as Joseph Hume, and a great deal pleasanter. A careful observer of life, Bernard, has no need to invent. Nature romances it for him. Dinner plates rattle, and I positively shall incur indigestion by carrying it half concocted to the post-house. Let me congratulate you on the spring coming in, and do you in return condole with me on the winter going out. When the old one goes, seldom comes a better. I dread the prospect of summer, with his all day-long days. No need of his assistance to make country places dull. With fire and candle-light, I can dream myself in Holborn. With lightsome skies shining in to bedtime I cannot. This is Meschek, and these are the tents of Kedar. I would dwell in the skirts of Jericho rather, and think every blast of the coming in mail a ram's horn. Give me old London at fire and plague time, rather than these tepid gales, healthy country airs, and purposeless exercise.

“Leg of mutton absolutely on the table.

“Take our hasty loves and a short farewell.

“C. L.”

A rural conflagration at this time kindled the noblest range of Lamb's thoughts, which he expressed in the following letter. The light he flashes on the strange power exerted by the half-witted incendiary shows in it something of a fearful grandeur. It is addressed

TO MR. DYER.

“Dear Dyer,—I should have written before to thank you for your kind letter, written with your own hand. It glads us to see your writing. It will give you pleasure to hear that after so much illness we are in tolerable health and spirits once more. Poor Enfield, that has been so peaceable hitherto, has caught the inflammatory fever; the tokens are upon her; and a great fire was blazing last night in the barns and haystacks of a farmer, about half a mile from us. Where will these things end? There is no doubt of its being the work of some ill-disposed rustic, but how is he to be discovered? They go to work in the dark with strange chemical preparations, unknown

to our forefathers. There is not even a dark lantern, to have a chance of detecting these Guy Fauxes. We are past the iron age, and are got into the fiery age, undreamed of by Ovid. You are lucky in Clifford's Inn, where I think you have few ricks or stacks worth the burning. Pray, keep as little corn by you as you can, for fear of the worst. It was never good times in England since the poor began to speculate upon their condition. Formerly they jogged on with as little reflection as horses. The whistling ploughman went cheek by jowl with his brother that neighed. Now the biped carries a box of phosphorus in his leather breeches, and in the dead of night the half-illuminated beast steals his magic potion into a cleft in a barn, and half the country is grinning with new fires. Farmer Graystock said something to the touchy rustic, that he did not relish, and he writes his distaste in flames. What a power to intoxicate his crude brains, just muddlingly awake to perceive that something is wrong in the social system,—what a hellish faculty above gunpowder ! Now the rich and poor are fairly pitted. We shall see who can hang or burn the fastest. It is not always revenge that stimulates these kindlings. There is a love of exciting mischief ! Think of a

disrespected clod, that was trod into earth; that was nothing; on a sudden by damned arts refined into an exterminating angel, devouring the fruits of the earth, and their growers, in a mass of fire; what a new existence! What a temptation above Lucifer's! Why, here was a spectacle last-night for a whole country, a bonfire visible to London, alarming her guilty towers, and shaking the Monument with an ague fit, all done by a little vial of phosphor in a clown's fob. How he must grin, and shake his empty noddle in clouds! The Vulcanian epicure! Alas! can we ring the bells backward? Can we unlearn the arts that pretend to civilise, and then burn the world? There is a march of science; but who shall beat the drums for its retreat? Who shall persuade the boor that phosphor will not ignite? Seven goodly stacks of hay, with corn-barns proportionable, lie smoking ashes and chaff, which man and beast would sputter out and reject like those apples of asphaltes and bitumen. The food for the inhabitants of earth will quickly disappear. Hot rolls may say, *Fuimus panes, fuit quartern-loaf, et ingens gloria apple-pasty-orum.* That the good old munching system may last thy

time and mine, good un-incendiary George ! is the devout prayer of thine,

“ To the last crust,

“ C. LAMB.”

Lamb's kindness to Hone was not confined to his contributions to the “ Every-day Book,” and the “ Table Book.” Those pleasant and blameless works had failed to supply an adequate income for a numerous family, and Lamb was desirous of interesting his influential friends in a new project of Hone's, to establish himself in a coffee-house conducted in a superior style. With this view, he wrote to Southey, who, nobly forgetting Hone's old heresies in politics or parodies, had made a genial reference to his late work in his “ Life of Bunyan.”

TO MR. SOUTHEY.

“ Dear Southey,—My friend Hone, whom you would like *for a friend*, I found deeply impressed with your generous notice of him in your beautiful ‘ Life of Bunyan,’ which I am just now full of. He has written to you for leave to publish a certain good-natured letter. I write not this to enforce his

request, for we are fully aware that the refusal of such publication would be quite consistent with all that is good in your character. Neither he nor I expect it from you, nor exact it; but if you would consent to it, you would have me obliged by it, as well as him. What right I have to interfere, you best know. Look on me as a dog who went once temporarily insane, and bit you, and now begs for a crust. Will you set your wits to a dog?

“Our object is to open a subscription, which my friends of the ——— are most willing to forward for him, but think that a leave from you to publish would aid it.

“But not an atom of respect or kindness will or shall it abate in either of us, if you decline it. Have this strongly in your mind.

“Those ‘Every-day’ and ‘Table’ Books will be a treasure a hundred years hence, but they have failed to make Hone’s fortune.

“Here his wife and all his children are about me, gaping for coffee customers; but how should they come in, seeing no pot boiling!

“Enough of Hone. I saw Coleridge a day or two since. He has had some severe attack, not paralytic; but, if I had not heard of it, I should

not have found it out. He looks, and especially speaks, strong. How are all the Wordsworths, and all the Southey's, whom I am obliged to you if you have not brought up haters of the name of,

“C. LAMB?”

“P. S.—I have gone lately into the acrostic line. I find genius (such as I had) declines with me, but I get clever. Do you know any body that wants charades, or such things, for Albums? I do 'em at so much a sheet. Perhaps an epigram (not a very happy-gram) I did for a school-boy yesterday may amuse. I pray Jove he may not get a flogging for any false quantity; but 'tis, with one exception, the only Latin verses I have made for forty years, and I did it ‘to order.’

CUIQUE SUUM.

Adsciscit sibi divitias et opes alienas

*Fur, rapiens, spolians, quod mihi, quod-que tibi,
Proprium erat, temneus hæc verba, meum-que, tuum-que;*

Omne suum est: tandem Cui-que Suum tribuit.

Dat vesti collum; restes, vah! carnifici dat;

Se se Diabolo, sic bene; Cuique Suum.

“I write from Hone's, therefore Mary cannot send her love to Mrs. Southey, but I do.

“Yours ever,

“C. L.”

In 1830, Lamb took a journey to Bury St. Edmund's, to fetch Miss Isola to her adopted home, from a visit which had been broken by her illness. It was on his return that Lamb's repartee to the query of the statistical gentleman as to the prospects of the turnip crop, which has been repeatedly published, was made. The following is his own version of it, contained in a letter addressed to Miss Isola's hostess, on their arrival.

“A rather talkative gentleman, but very civil, engaged me in a discourse for full twenty miles, on the probable advantages of steam carriages, which, being merely problematical, I bore my part in with some credit, in spite of my totally un-engineer-like faculties. But when, somewhere about Stanstead, he put an unfortunate question to me, as to the ‘probability of its turning out a good turnip season,’ and when I, who am still less of an agriculturist than a steam philosopher, not knowing a turnip from a potato ground, innocently made answer, that ‘I believed it depended very much upon boiled legs of mutton,’ my unlucky reply set Miss Isola a laughing to a degree that disturbed her tranquillity for the only moment in our journey. I am afraid my credit sank very low with my other

fellow-traveller, who had thought he had met with a well-informed passenger, which is an accident so desirable in a stage-coach. We were rather less communicative, but still friendly, the rest of the way."

To the same lady, having sent him an acrostic on his sister's name, he replied with a letter which contained one on hers, and the following notice of his own talent in the acrostic line.

"Dear Madam, —I do assure you that your verses gratified me very much, and my sister is quite *proud* of them. For the first time in my life I congratulated myself upon the shortness and meanness of my name. Had it been for Schwartzenberg or Esterhazy, it would have put you to some puzzle. I am afraid I shall sicken you of acrostics, but this last was written *to order*. I beg you to have inserted in your county paper, something like this advertisement. 'To the nobility, gentry, and others, about Bury.—C. Lamb respectfully informs his friends and the public in general, that he is leaving off business in the acrostic line, as he is going into an entirely new line. Rebuses and charades done as usual, and

upon the old terms. Also, epitaphs to suit the memory of any person deceased.’

“ I thought I had adroitly escaped the rather un-
pliable name of ‘ Williams ’ curtailing your poor
daughter’s verses to her proper surnames, but it
seems you would not let me off so easily. If these
trifles amuse you, I am paid. Though really ’tis
an operation so much like—‘ A, apple-pie ; B, bit
it.’ To make amends, I request leave to lend you
the ‘ Excursion,’ and to recommend, in particular,
the ‘ Church-yard Stories ;’ in the seventh book, I
think. They will strengthen the tone of your
mind after its weak diet on acrostics.”

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In 1830, a small volume of poems, the glean-
ings of some years, during which Lamb had de-
voted himself to prose, under his name of “ Elia,”
was published by Mr. Moxon, under the title of
“ Album Verses,” and which Lamb, in token of
his strong regard, dedicated to the Publisher.
An unfavourable review of them in the Literary
Gazette, produced some verses from Southey,
which were inserted in the Times, and of which
the following, as evincing his unchanged friend-
ship, may not unfitly be inserted here. The

residue, being more severe on Lamb's critics than Lamb himself would have wished, may now be spared.

Charles Lamb, to those who know thee justly dear
For rarest genius, and for sterling worth,
Unchanging friendship, warmth of heart sincere,
And wit that never gave an ill thought birth,
Nor ever in its sport infix'd a sting;
To us who have admired and loved thee long,
It is a proud as well as pleasant thing
To hear thy good report, now borne along
Upon the honest breath of public praise :
We know that with the elder sons of song,
In honouring whom thou hast delighted still,
Thy name shall keep its course to after days.

This year closed upon the gave of Hazlitt. Lamb visited him frequently during his last illness, and attended his funeral. They had taken great delight in each other's conversation for many years ; and though the indifference of Lamb to the objects of Hazlitt's passionate love or hatred, as a politician, at one time produced a coolness, the warmth of the defence of Hazlitt in " Elia's Letter to Southey," renewed the old regard of the philosopher, and set all to rights. Hazlitt, in his turn, as an Edinburgh Reviewer, had opportunities which he delighted to use, of alluding to Lamb's Specimens and Essays, and making him amends for the severity of ancient criticism, which the

editor, who could well afford the genial inconsistency, was too generous to exclude. 'The conduct, indeed, of that distinguished person to Hazlitt, especially in his last illness, won Lamb's admiration, and wholly effaced the recollection of the time when, thirty-years before, his play had been denied critical mercy under his rule. Hazlitt's death did not so much shock Lamb at the time, as it weighed down his spirits afterwards, when he felt the want of those essays which he had used periodically to look for with eagerness in the magazines and reviews which they alone, made tolerable to him; and when he realized the dismal certainty that he should never again enjoy that rich discourse of old poets and painters with which so many a long winter's night had been gladdened, or taste life with an additional relish in the keen sense of enjoyment which endeared it to his companion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

[1830 to 1834.]

LAMB'S LAST LETTERS AND DEATH.

AFTER the year 1830, Lamb's verses and essays were chiefly given to his friends; the former consisting of album contributions, the latter of little essences of observation and criticism. Mr. Moxon, having established a new magazine, called the "Englishman's Magazine," induced him to write a series of papers, some of which were not inferior to his happiest essays. At this time, his old and excellent friend, Dyer, was much annoyed by some of his witticisms,—which, in truth, were only Lamb's modes of expressing his deep-seated regard; and at the quotation of a couplet in one of his early poems, which he had suppressed as liable to be misconstrued by Mr. Rogers. Mr. Barker

had unfortunately met with the unexpurgated edition which contained this dubious couplet, and in his "Memorials of Dr. Parr" quoted the passage ; which, to Mr. Dyer's delicate feelings*, conveyed the apprehension that Mr. Rogers would treat the suppression as colourable, and refer the revival of the lines to his sanction. The following letter was written to dispel those fears from his mind.

TO MR. DYER.

" Dear Dyer,—Mr. Rogers, and Mr. Rogers' friends, are perfectly assured, that you never in-

* Mr. Dyer also complained to Mr. Lamb of some suggestions in *Elia*, which annoyed him, not so much for his own sake as for the sake of others who, in the delicacy of his apprehensiveness, he thought might feel aggrieved by imputations which were certainly not intended, and which they did not deserve. One passage in *Elia*, hinting that he had been hardly dealt with by schoolmasters, under whom he had been a teacher in his younger days, hurt him ; as, in fact, he was treated by them with the most considerate generosity and kindness. Another passage which he regarded as implying that he had been underpaid by booksellers also vexed him ; as his labours have always been highly esteemed, and have, according to the rate of remuneration of learned men, been well compensated by Mr. Valpy and others. The truth is that Lamb wrote from a vague recollection, without intending any personal reference at all to Mr. Dyer himself, and only seeking to illustrate the pure, simple, and elevated character of a man of letters, " unspotted from the world." Probably no one has ever applied these suggestions to the parties for whose reputation Mr. Dyer has been so honourably anxious but himself ; but it is due to his feelings to state that they are founded in error.

tended any harm by an innocent couplet, and that in the revivication of it by blundering Barker you had no hand whatever. To imagine that, at this time of day, Rogers broods over a fantastic expression of more than thirty years' standing, would be to suppose him indulging his 'pleasures of memory' with a vengeance. You never penned a line which for its own sake you need, dying, wish to blot. You mistake your heart if you think you *can* write a lampoon. Your whips are rods of roses. Your spleen has ever had for its object, vices, not the vicious; abstract offences, not the concrete sinner. But you are sensitive, and wince as much at the consciousness of having committed a compliment, as another man would at the perpetration of an affront. But do not lug me into the same soreness of conscience with yourself. I maintain, and will to the last hour, that I never writ of you but *con amore*. That if any allusion was made to your near-sightedness, it was not for the purpose of mocking an infirmity, but of connecting it with scholar-like habits; for, is it not erudite and scholarly to be somewhat near of sight, before age naturally brings on the malady? You could not then plead the *obrepens senectus*. Did I not moreover make it an apology for a certain *absence*,

which some of your friends may have experienced, when you have not on a sudden made recognition of them in a casual street-meeting? and did I not strengthen your excuse for this slowness of recognition, by further accounting morally for the present engagement of your mind in worthy objects? Did I not, in your person, make the handsomest apology for absent-of-mind people that was ever made? If these things be not so, I never knew what I wrote, or meant by my writing, and have been penning libels all my life without being aware of it. Does it follow that I should have exprest myself exactly in the same way of those dear old eyes of yours *now*, now that Father Time has conspired with a hard task-master to put a last extinguisher upon them. I should as soon have insulted the Answerer of Salmasius, when he awoke up from his ended task, and saw no more with mortal vision. But you are many films removed yet from Milton's calamity. You write perfectly intelligibly. Marry, the letters are not all of the same size or tallness; but that only shows your proficiency in the *hands*, text, german-hand, court-hand, sometimes law-hand, and affords variety. You pen better than you did a twelvemonth ago; and if you continue to improve, you bid fair to win

the golden pen which is the prize at your young gentlemen's academy. But you must be aware of Valpy, and his printing-house, that hazy cave of Trophonius, out of which it was a mercy that you escaped with a glimmer. Beware of MSS. and Variæ Lectiones. Settle the text for once in your mind, and stick to it. You have some years' good sight in you yet, if you do not tamper with it. It is not for you (for *us* I should say), to go poring into Greek contractions, and star-gazing upon slim Hebrew points. We have yet the sight

Of sun, and moon, and star, throughout the year,
And man and woman.

You have vision enough to discern Mrs. Dyer from the other comely gentlewoman who lives up at stair-case No. 5; or, if you should make a blunder in the twilight, Mrs. Dyer has too much good sense to be jealous for a mere effect of imperfect optics. But don't try to write the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments, in the compass of a half-penny; nor run after a midge, or a mote, to catch it, and leave off hunting for needles in bushels of hay, for all these things strain the eyes. The snow is six feet deep in some parts here. I must put on jack-boots to get at the post-office with this. It is not good for weak eyes to pore

upon snow too much. It lies in drifts. I wonder what its drift is; only that it makes good pancakes, remind Mrs. Dyer. It turns a pretty green world into a white one. It glares too much for an innocent colour methinks. I wonder why you think I dislike gilt edges. They set off a letter marvellously. Yours, for instance, looks for all the world like a tablet of curious *hieroglyphics* in a gold frame. But don't go and lay this to your eyes. You always wrote hieroglyphically, yet not to come up to the mystical notations and conjuring characters of Doctor Parr. You never wrote what I call a schoolmaster's hand, like C——; nor a woman's hand, like S——; nor a Missal hand, like Porson; nor an all-of-the-wrong-side sloping hand, like Miss H——; nor a dogmatic, Mede-and-Persian, peremptory hand, like R——; but you ever wrote what I call a Grecian's hand; what the Grecians write (or used) at Christ's Hospital; such as Whalley would have admired, and Boyer have applauded, but Smith or Atwood (writing-masters) would have horsed you for. Your boy-of-genius hand and your mercantile hand are various. By your flourishes, I should think you never learned to make eagles or corkscrews, or flourish the governors' names in the writing-school; and by the tenor and cut of your

letters, I suspect you were never in it at all. By the length of this scrawl you will think I have a design upon your optics; but I have writ as large as I could, out of respect to them; too large, indeed, for beauty. Mine is a sort of deputy Grecian's hand; a little better, and more of a worldly hand, than a Grecian's, but still remote from the mercantile. I don't know how it is, but I keep my rank in fancy still since school-days. I can never forget I was a deputy Grecian! And writing to you, or to Coleridge, besides affection, I feel a reverential deference as to Grecians still. I keep my soaring way above the Great Erasmians, yet far beneath the other. Alas! what am I now? what is a Leadenhall clerk, or India pensioner, to a deputy Grecian? How art thou fallen, O Lucifer! Just room for our loves to Mrs. D., &c.

“ C. LAMB.”

The following letter is

TO MR. CAREY.

“ Assidens est mihi bona soror, Euripiden evolvens, donum vestrum, carissime Carey, pro quo gratias agimus, lecturi atque iterum lecturi idem.

Pergratus est liber ambobus, nempe ‘Sacerdotis Commiserationis,’ sacrum opus a te ipso Humanissimæ Religionis Sacerdote dono datum. Lachrymantes gavisuri sumus; est ubi dolor fiat voluptas; nec semper dulce mihi est ridere; aliquando commutandum est he! he! he! cum heu! heu! heu!

“A Musis Tragicis me non penitus abhorruisse testis sit Carmen Calamitosum, nescio quo autore linguâ prius vernaculâ scriptum, et nuperrimè a me ipso Latine versum, scilicet, ‘Tom Tom of Islington.’ Tenuistine?

‘Thomas Thomas de Islington,
Uxorem duxit Die quâdam Solis,
Abduxit domum sequenti die,
Emit baculum subsequenti,
Vapulat illa posterâ,
Ægrotat succedenti, Mortua fit crastinâ.’

Et miro gaudio afficitur Thomas luce posterâ quod subsequenti (nempe, Dominicâ) uxor sit efferenda.

‘En Iliades Domesticas!
En circulum calamitatum!
Planè hebdomadalem tragœdiam.’

I nunc et confer Euripiden vestram his luctibus, hâc morte uxoriâ; confer Alcesten! Hecuben! quas non antiquas Heroïnas Dolorosas.

“Suffundor genas lachrymis tantas strages revolvens. Quid restat nisi quod Tecum Tuam

Caram salutamus ambosque valere jubeamus, nosmet ipsi bene valentes.

“ ELIA.

“ Datum ab agro Enfeldiensi, Maii die sextâ, 1831.”

The death of Munden reviving his recollections of “the veteran comedian,” called forth the following letter of 11th February, 1832, to the editor of the *Athenæum*, whom Lamb had, for a long time, numbered among his friends.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'ATHENÆUM.'

“ Dear Sir,—Your communication to me of the death of Munden made me weep. Now, Sir, I am not of the melting mood. But, in these serious times, the loss of half the world's fun is no trivial deprivation. It was my loss (or *gain* shall I call it) in the early time of my play-going, to have missed all Munden's acting. There was only he, and Lewis at Covent Garden, while Drury Lane was exuberant with Parsons, Dodd, &c., such a comic company as, I suppose, the stage never showed. Thence, in the evening of my life I had Munden all to myself, more mellowed, richer, perhaps, than ever. I cannot say what his change of faces produced in me. It was not acting. He was

not one of my 'old actors.' It might be better. His power was extravagant. I saw him one evening in three drunken characters. Three farces were played. One part was *Dosey*—I forget the rest; but they were so discriminated that a stranger might have seen them all, and not have dreamed that he was seeing the same actor. I am jealous for the actors who pleased my youth. He was not a Parsons or a Dodd, but he was more wonderful. He seemed as if he could *do* any thing. He was not an actor, but something *better*, if you please. Shall I instance *Old Foresight*, in 'Love for Love,' in which Parsons was at once the old man, the astrologer, &c. Munden dropped the old man, the doater—which makes the character—but he substituted for it a moon-struck character, a perfect abstraction from this earth, that looked as if he had newly come down from the planets. Now, *that* is not what I call *acting*. It might be better. He was imaginative; he could impress upon an audience an *idea*—the low one, perhaps, of a leg of mutton and turnips; but such was the grandeur and singleness of his expressions, that that single expression would convey to all his auditory a notion of all the pleasures they had all received from all the legs of mutton *and turnips* they had ever eaten

in their lives. Now, this is not *acting*, nor do I set down Munden amongst my old actors. He was only a wonderful man, exerting his vivid impressions through the agency of the stage. In one only thing did I see him *act*—that is, support a character; it was in a wretched farce, called 'Johnny Gilpin,' for Downton's benefit, in which he did a cockney. The thing ran but one night; but when I say that Liston's *Lubin Log* was nothing to it, I say little; it was transcendent. And here let me say of actors, *envious* actors, that of *Munden*, Liston was used to speak, almost with the enthusiasm due to the dead, in terms of such allowed superiority to every actor on the stage, and this at a time when Munden was gone by in the world's estimation, that it convinced me that *artists* (in which term I include poets, painters, &c.), are not so envious as the world think. I have little time, and therefore enclose a criticism on Munden's *Old Dosey* and his general acting*, by a friend.

"C. LAMB."

"Mr. Munden appears to us to be the most *classical* of actors. He is that in high farce, which

* A little article inserted in "The Champion" before Lamb wrote his essay on the Acting of Munden. Lamb's repetition may cast on it sufficient interest to excuse its repetition here.

Kemble was in high tragedy. The lines of these great artists are, it must be admitted, sufficiently distinct; but the same elements are in both,—the same directness of purpose, the same singleness of aim, the same concentration of power, the same iron-casing of inflexible manner, the same statue-like precision of gesture, movement, and attitude. The hero of farce is as little affected with impulses from without, as the retired Prince of Tragedians. There is something solid, sterling, almost adamantine, in the building up of his most grotesque characters. When he fixes his wonder-working face in any of its most amazing varieties, it looks as if the picture were carved out from a rock by Nature in a sportive vein, and might last for ever. It is like what we can imagine a mask of the old Grecian Comedy to have been, only that it lives, and breathes, and changes. His most fantastical gestures are the grand ideal of farce. He seems as though he belonged to the earliest and the stateliest age of Comedy, when instead of superficial foibles and the airy varieties of fashion, she had the grand asperities of man to work on, when her grotesque images had something romantic about them, and when humour and parody were themselves heroic. His expressions of feeling and bursts of enthusiasm

are among the most genuine which we have ever felt. They seem to come up from a depth of emotion in the heart, and burst through the sturdy casing of manner with a strength which seems increased ten-fold by its real and hearty obstacle. The workings of his spirit seem to expand his frame, till we can scarcely believe that by measure it is small; for the space which he fills in the imagination is so real, that we almost mistake it for that of corporeal dimensions. His *Old Dosey*, in the excellent farce of 'Past Ten o'Clock,' is his grandest effort of this kind, and we know of nothing finer. He seems to have a 'heart of oak' indeed. His description of a sea-fight is the most noble and triumphant piece of enthusiasm which we remember. It is as if the spirits of a whole crew of nameless heroes 'were swelling in his bosom.' We never felt so ardent and proud a sympathy with the valour of England as when we heard it. May health long be his, thus to do our hearts good—for we never saw any actor whose merits have the least resemblance to his even in species: and when his genius is withdrawn from the stage, we shall not have left even a term by which we can fitly describe it."

Coleridge, now in declining health, seems to have

feared, from a long intermission of Lamb's visits to Highgate, that there was some estrangement between them, and to have written to Lamb under that fear. The following note shows how much he was mistaken.

TO MR. COLERIDGE.

"April 14, 1832.

"My dear Coleridge,—Not an unkind thought has passed in my brain about you. But I have been woefully neglectful of you, so that I do not deserve to announce to you, that if I do not hear from you before then, I will set out on Wednesday morning to take you by the hand. I would do it this moment, but an unexpected visit might hurry you. I shall take silence for acquiescence; and come. I am glad you could write so long a letter. Old loves to, and hope of kind looks from, the Gilmans when I come.

"Yours, *semper idem*,

"C. L.

"If you ever thought an offence, much more wrote it, against me, it must have been in the times of Noah, and the great waters swept it away. Mary's most kind love, and may be a wrong prophet

of your bodings!—here she is crying for mere love over your letter. I wring out less, but not sincerer showers.

“My direction is simply, Enfield.”

Lamb's regard for Mr. Cary had now ripened into a fast friendship; and by agreement he dined every third Wednesday in the month at the Museum. In general, these were occasions on which Lamb observed the strictest rules of temperance; but once accident of stomach or of sentiment caused a woful deviation, which Lamb deplored in the following letter.

TO MR. CARY.

“I protest I know not in what words to invest my sense of the shameful violation of hospitality, which I was guilty of on that fatal Wednesday. Let it be blotted from the calendar. Had it been committed at a layman's house, say a merchant's, or a manufacturer's, a cheese-monger's, or green-grocer's, or, to go higher, a barrister's, a member of Parliament's, a rich banker's, I should have felt alleviation, a drop of self-pity. But to be seen deliberately to go out of the house of a clergyman

drunk ! a clergyman of the Church of England too ! not that alone, but of an expounder of that dark Italian Hierophant, an exposition little short of *his* who dared unfold the Apocalypse : divine riddles both ; and, without supernal grace vouchsafed, Arks not to be fingered without present blasting to the touchers. And then, from what house ! Not a common glebe, or vicarage (which yet had been shameful), but from a kingly repository of sciences, human and divine, with the Primate of England for its guardian, arrayed in public majesty, from which the profane vulgar are bid fly. Could all those volumes have taught me nothing better ? With feverish eyes on the succeeding dawn I opened upon the faint light, enough to distinguish, in a strange chamber, not immediately to be recognised, garters, hose, waistcoat, neckerchief, arranged in dreadful order and proportion, which I knew was not mine own. 'Tis the common symptom, on awaking, I judge my last night's condition from. A tolerable scattering on the floor I hail as being too probably my own, and if the candle-stick be not removed, I assoil myself. But this finical arrangement, this finding every thing in the morning in exact diametrical rectitude, torments me. Remote whispers suggested

that I *coached* it home in triumph. Far be that from working pride in me, for I was unconscious of the locomotion. That a young Mentor accompanied a reprobate old Telemachus; that, the Trojan like, he bore his charge upon his shoulders, while the wretched incubus, in glimmering sense, hiccuped drunken snatches of flying on the bats' wings after sunset. An aged servitor was also hinted at, to make disgrace more complete, one, to whom my ignominy may offer further occasions of revolt (to which he was before too fondly inclining) from the true faith; for, at a sight of my helplessness, what more was needed to drive him to the advocacy of independency? Occasion led me through Great Russel Street yesterday. I gazed at the great knocker. My feeble hands in vain essayed to lift it. I dreaded that Argus, who doubtless lanterned me out on that prodigious night. I called the Elginian marbles. They were cold to my suit. I shall never again, I said, on the wide gates unfolding, say, without fear of thrusting back, in a light but a peremptory air, 'I am going to Mr. Cary's.' I passed by the walls of Balclutha. I had imaged to myself a zodiac of third Wednesdays irradiating by glimpses the Edmonton dulness. I dreamed of Highmore!

I am de-vited to come on Wednesdays. Villanous old age, that, with second childhood, brings linked hand in hand her inseparable twin, new inexperience, which knows not effects of liquor. Where I was to have sate for a sober, middle-aged-and-a-half-gentleman, literary too, the neat fingered artist can educe no notions but of a dissoluted Silenus, lecturing natural philosophy to a jeering Chromius, or a Mnasilus. Pudet. From the context gather the lost name of ——."

In 1833 the choicest prose essays, which Lamb had written since the publication of *Elia*, were collected and published—as with a melancholy foreboding—under the title of "*The Last Essays of Elia*;" by Mr. Moxon. The work contains ample proof that the powers of the author had ripened rather than declined; for the paper called "*Blakesmoor in H—shire*," which embodies his recollection of the old mansion in which his grandmother lived as housekeeper; those on Elliston, "*Captain Jackson*," and "*The Old Margate Hoy*," are among the most original, the least constrained, and the most richly coloured of his works. It was favourably noticed by almost all the principal critics—by many enthusiastically and sincerely praised

—and an admirable notice in “The Quarterly” was published just after the foreboding of the title was fulfilled. His indisposition to write, however, increased ; but in creating so much, excellent in its kind, so complete in itself, and so little tinged with alloy, he had, in truth, done enough, and had earned in literature, as in the drudgery of the desk, a right to repose. Yet, still ready to obey the call of friendship, he wrote both prologue and epilogue to Knowles’s play of “The Wife;” the composition of which must have been mere labour, as they are only decently suited to the occasion, and have no mark or likelihood to repay the vanity of the poet.

Miss Isola’s marriage, which left Lamb and his sister once more alone, induced them to draw a little nearer to their friends ; and they fixed their abode in Church-street, Edmonton, within reach of the Enfield walks which custom had endeared to them. There with his sister he continued, regularly visiting London and dining with Mr. Cary on every third Wednesday. The following notelet is in answer to a letter inclosing a list of candidates for a widows’ fund society, for which he was entitled to vote.

TO MR. CARY.

“Dear Sir,—The unbounded range of munificence presented to my choice, staggers me. What can twenty votes do for one hundred and two widows? I cast my eyes hopeless among the viduages. N.B. Southey* might be ashamed of himself to let his aged mother stand at the top of the list, with his 100*l.* a year and butt of sack. Sometimes I sigh over No. 12, Mrs. Carve-ill, some poor relation of mine, no doubt. No. 15 has my wishes, but then she is a Welsh one. I have Ruth upon No. 21. I’d tug hard for No. 24. No. 25 is an anomaly, there can be no Mrs. Hog. No. 34 insnares me. No. 73 should not have met so foolish a person. No. 92 may bob it as she likes, but she catches no cherry of me. So I have even fixed at hap-hazard, as you’ll see.

“Yours, every third Wednesday,

“C. L.”

Lamb was entirely destitute of what is commonly called “a taste for music.” A few old tunes ran in his head; now and then the expres-

* A Mrs. Southey headed the inclosed list.

sion of a sentiment, though never of song, touched him with rare and exquisite delight; and Braham in his youth, Miss Rennell, who died too soon, and who used to sing the charming air, “In infancy our hopes and fears,” and Miss Burrell, won his ear and his heart. But usually music only confused him, and an opera—to which he once or twice tried to accompany Miss Isola—was to him a maze of sound in which he almost lost his wits. But he did not, therefore, take less pleasure in the success of Miss Clara Novello,—whose family he had known for many years,—and to whom he addressed the following lines which were inserted in the “Athenæum” of July 26, in this his last year.

TO CLARA N——.

The Gods have made me most unmusical,
With feelings that respond not to the call
Of stringed harp, or voice—obtuse and mute
To hautboy, sackbut, dulcimer, and flute;
King David’s lyre, that made the madness flee
From Saul, had been but a jew’s-harp to me:
Theorbos, violins, French horns, guitars,
Leave in my wounded ears inflicted scars;
I hate those trills, and shakes, and sounds that float
Upon the captive air; I know no note,
Nor ever shall, whatever folks may say,
Of the strange mysteries of *Sol* and *Fa*;
I sit at oratorios like a fish,
Incapable of sound, and only wish

The thing was over. Yet do I admire,
O tuneful daughter of a tuneful sire,
Thy painful labours in a science, which
To your deserts I pray may make you rich
As much as you are loved, and add a grace
To the most musical Novello race.
Women lead men by the nose, some cynics say ;
You draw them by the ear—a delicates way.

C. LAMB.

He had now to sustain the severest of his losses. After a long and painful illness—borne with a heroic patience which concealed the intensity of his sufferings from the bystanders, Coleridge died. As in the instance of Hazlitt, Lamb did not feel the immediate blow so acutely as he himself expected—but the calamity sank deep into his mind, and was, I believe, seldom far from his thoughts. It had been arranged that the attendance at the funeral should be confined to the family of the departed poet and philosopher, and Lamb, therefore, was spared the misery of going through the dismal ceremony of mourning. For the first week he forbore to write ; but at its close he addressed the following short letter to one of the family of him whom he once so justly denominated Coleridge's "more than friend." Like most of Lamb's letters, it is undated, but the postmark is August 5, 1834.

TO THE REV. JAMES GILMAN.

“ My Dear Sir,—The sad week being over, I must write to you to say, that I was glad of being spared from attending ; I have no words to express my feeling with you all. I can only say that when you think a short visit from me would be acceptable, when your father and mother shall be able to see me *with comfort*, I will come to the bereaved house. Express to them my tenderest regards, and hopes that they will continue our friends still. We both love and respect them as much as a human being can, and finally thank them with our hearts for what they have been to the poor departed.

“ God bless you all.

“ C. LAMB.

“ Mr. Walden’s, Church-street, Edmonton.”

Shortly after, assured that his presence would be welcome, Lamb went to Highgate. There he asked leave to see the nurse who had attended upon Coleridge ; and being struck and affected by the feeling she manifested towards his friend, insisted on her receiving five guineas from him,—a gratuity which seemed almost incomprehensible to the poor woman, but which Lamb could not help

giving as an immediate expression of his own gratitude. From her he learned the effort by which Coleridge had suppressed the expression of his sufferings, and the discovery affected him even more than the news of his death. He would startle his friends sometimes by suddenly exclaiming, "Coleridge is dead!" and then pass on to common themes, having obtained the momentary relief of oppressed spirits. He still continued, however, his monthly visits to Mr. Cary, and was ready to write an acrostic, or a complimentary epigram, at the suggestion of any friend. The following is the last of his effusions in verse.

TO MARGARET W——.

‘Margaret, in happy hour
Christen’d from that humble flower
Which we a daisy* call!
May thy pretty name-sake be
In all things a type of thee,
And image thee in all.

Like *it* you show a modest face,
An unpretending native grace;—
The tulip, and the pink,
The china and the damask rose,
And every flaunting flower that blows,
In the comparing shrink.

* Marguerite, in French, signifies a daisy.

Of lowly fields you think no scorn;
Yet gayest gardens would adorn,
And grace, wherever set.
Home-seated in your lonely bower,
Or wedded—a transplanted flower—
I bless you, Margaret!

CHARLES LAMB.

Edmonton, Oct. 8, 1834.

A present of game, from an unknown admirer, produced the following acknowledgment, in the Athenæum of 30th November, destined to be, in sad verity, the last essay of Elia.

THOUGHTS ON PRESENTS OF GAME, &c.

“We love to have our friend in the country sitting thus at our table *by proxy*; to apprehend his presence (though a hundred miles may be between us) by a turkey, whose goodly aspect reflects to us his ‘plump corpusculum;’ to taste him in grouse or woodcock; to feel him gliding down in the toast peculiar to the latter; to concorporate him in a slice of Canterbury brawn. This is indeed to have him within ourselves; to know him intimately; such participation is methinks *unitive*, as the old theologians phrase it.”—*Last Essays of Elia*.

“Elia presents his acknowledgments to his ‘Correspondent unknown,’ for a basket of prodigiously fine game. He takes for granted that so amiable a character must be a reader of the *Athenæum*, else he had meditated a notice in *The Times*. Now if this friend had consulted the Delphic oracle for a present suited to the palate of Elia, he could not have hit upon a morsel so acceptable. The birds he is barely thankful for; pheasants are poor *fowls* disguised in fine feathers. But a hare roasted hard and brown, with gravy and melted butter!—old Mr. Chambers, the sensible clergyman in Warwickshire, whose son’s acquaintance has made many hours happy in the life of Elia, used to allow a pound of Epping to every hare. Perhaps that was over-doing it. But, in spite of the note of Philomel, who, like some fine poets, that think no scorn to adopt plagiarisms from a humble brother, reiterates every spring her cuckoo cry of ‘Jug, Jug, Jug,’ Elia pronounces that a hare, to be truly palated, must be roasted. Jugging sophisticates her. In *our* way it eats so ‘crips,’ as Mrs. Minikin says. ‘Time was, when Elia was not arrived at his taste, that he preferred to all luxuries a roasted pig. But he disclaims all such green-sickness appetites in future, though he

hath to acknowledge the receipt of many a delicacy in that kind from correspondents—good, but mistaken men—in consequence of their erroneous supposition, that he had carried up into mature life the prepossessions of childhood. From the worthy Vicar of Enfield he acknowledges a tithe contribution of extraordinary sapor. The ancients must have loved hares. Else why adopt the word *lepores* (obviously from *lepus*) but for some subtle analogy between the delicate flavour of the latter, and the finer relishes of wit in what we most poorly translate *pleasantries*. The fine madnesses of the poet are the very decoction of his diet. Thence is he hare-brained. Harum-scarum is a libellous unfounded phrase, of modern usage. 'Tis true the hare is the most circumspect of animals, sleeping with her eye open. Her ears, ever erect, keep them in that wholesome exercise, which conduces them to form the very tit-bit of the admirers of this noble animal. Noble will I call her, in spite of her detractors, who from occasional demonstrations of the principle of self-preservation (common to all animals), infer in her a defect of heroism. Half a hundred horsemen, with thrice the number of dogs, scour the country in pursuit of puss across three counties; and because the well-

flavoured beast, weighing the odds, is willing to evade the hue and cry, with her delicate ears shrinking perchance from discord—comes the grave naturalist, Linnæus perchance, or Buffon, and gravely sets down the hare as a—timid animal. Why Achilles, or Bully Dawson, would have declined the preposterous combat.

“In fact, how light of digestion we feel after a hare! How tender its processes after swallowing! What chyle it promotes! How ethereal! as if its living celerity were a type of its nimble coursing through the animal juices. The notice might be longer. It is intended less as a Natural History of the Hare, than a cursory thanks to the country ‘good Unknown.’ The hare has many friends, but none sincerer than

“ELIA.”

A short time only before Lamb’s fatal illness, he yielded to my urgent importunity, and met a small party of his friends at dinner at my house, where we had provided for him some of the few articles of food which now seemed to hit his fancy, and among them the hare, which had supplanted pig in his just esteem, with the hope of exciting his very delicate appetite. We were not disappointed; he

ate with a relish not usual with him of late years, and passed the evening in his happiest mood. Among the four or five who met him on this occasion, the last on which I saw him in health, were his old friends Mr. Barron Field, Mr. Procter, and Mr. Forster, the author of the “Lives of Eminent English Statesmen,” a friend of comparatively recent date, but one with whom Lamb found himself as much at home as if he had known him for years. Mr. Field, in a short but excellent memoir of Lamb, in the “Annual Biography and Obituary” of 1836, has brought this evening vividly to recollection; and I have a melancholy satisfaction in quoting a passage from it as he has recorded it. After justly eulogizing Lamb’s sense of “The Virtue of Suppression in Writing,” Mr. Field proceeds:—

“We remember, at the very last supper we ate with him, he quoted a passage from Prior’s ‘Henry and Emma,’ illustrative of this discipline; and yet he said that he loved Prior as much as any man, but that his ‘Henry and Emma’ was a vapid paraphrase of the old poem of ‘The Nutbrowne Mayde.’ For example, at the *dénouement* of the ballad Prior makes Henry rant out to his devoted Emma—

‘ In me behold the potent Edgar’s heir,
Illustrious Earl ! him terrible in war.

Let Loire confess, for she has felt his sword,
And trembling fled before the British lord.'

And so on for a dozen couplets, heroic, as they are called. And then Mr. Lamb made us mark the modest simplicity with which the noble youth discloses himself to his mistress in the old poem:—

' Now, understand,
To Westmoreland,
Which is my heritage,
(in a parenthesis, as it were,)
I will you bring,
And with a ring,
By way of marriage,
I will you take,
And lady make,
As shortly as I can.
So have you won
An Earle's son,
And not a vanquish'd man.'

"How he loved these old rhymes, and with what justice!"—p. 14, 15.

In December Mr. Lamb received a letter from a gentleman, a stranger to him,—Mr. Childs, of Bungay, whose copy of "Elia" had been sent on an oriental voyage, and who, in order to replace it, applied to Mr. Lamb. The following is his reply.

TO MR. CHILDS.

“ Monday. Church-street, EDMONTON, (not Enfield,
as you erroneously direct yours.)

“ Dear Sir,—The volume which you seem to want, is not to be had for love or money. I with difficulty procured a copy for myself. Yours is gone to enlighten the tawny Hindoos. What a supreme felicity to the author (only he is no traveller) on the Ganges or Hydaspes (Indian streams) to meet a smutty Gentoo ready to burst with laughing at the tale of Bo-Bo! for doubtless it hath been translated into all the dialects of the East. I grieve the less, that Europe should want it. I cannot gather from your letter, whether you are aware that a second series of the Essays is published by Moxon, in Dover-street, Piccadilly, called ‘The Last Essays of Elia,’ and, I am told, is not inferior to the former. Shall I order a copy for you, and will you accept it? Shall I *lend* you, at the same time, my sole copy of the former volume (Oh! return it) for a month or two? In return, you shall favour me with the loan of one of those Norfolk grunTERS that you laud so highly; I promise not to keep it above a day. What a funny name Bungay is! I never dreamt of a correspon-

dent thence. I used to think of it as some Utopian town, or borough in Gotham land. I now believe in its existence, as part of merry England.

[Here are some lines scratched out.]

The part I have scratched out is the best of the letter. Let me have your commands.

“CH. LAMB, *alias* ELIA.”

A few days after this letter was written, an accident befel Mr. Lamb, which seemed trifling at first, but which terminated in a fatal issue. In taking his daily morning walk on the London Road as far as the inn where John Gilpin's ride is pictured, he stumbled against a stone, fell, and slightly injured his face. The wounds seemed healing, when erysipelas in the head came on, and he sunk beneath the disease, happily without pain. On Friday evening Mr. Ryle, of the India House, who had been appointed co-executor with me of his will some years before, called on me, and informed me that he was in danger. I went over to Edmonton on the following morning, and found him very weak, and nearly insensible to things passing around him. Now and then a few words were audible, from which it seemed that his mind, in its feebleness, was intent on kind and hospitable

thoughts. His last correspondent, Mr. Childs, had sent a present of a turkey, instead of the suggested pig; and the broken sentences which could be heard, were of some meeting of friends to partake of it. I do not think he knew me; and having vainly tried to engage his attention, I quit-
ted him, not believing his death so near at hand. In less than an hour afterwards, his voice gradually grew fainter, as he still murmured the names of Moxon, Procter, and some other old friends, and he sank into death as placidly as into sleep. On the following Saturday his remains were laid in a deep grave in Edmonton churchyard, made in a spot which, about a fortnight before, he had pointed out to his sister, on an afternoon wintry walk, as the place where he wished to be buried.

So died, in the sixtieth year of his age, one of the most remarkable and amiable men who have ever lived. Few of his numerous friends were aware of his illness before they heard of his death; and, until that illness seized him, he had appeared so little changed by time, so likely to continue for several years, and he was so intimately associated with every-day engagements and feelings, that the news was as strange as it was mournful. When the first sad surprise was over, several of his friends

strove to do justice to their own recollections of him ; and articles upon his character and writings, all written out of the heart, appeared from Mr. Procter in the "Athenæum," from Mr. Forster in the "New Monthly Magazine," from Mr. Patmore in the "Court Magazine," and from Mr. Moxon in Leigh Hunt's London Journal, besides others whose authors are unknown to me ; and subsequently many affectionate allusions, from pens which his own had inspired, have been gleaned out in various passages of "Blackwood," "Fraser," "Tait," and almost every periodical work of reputation. The "Recollections of Coleridge" by Mr. Allsop, also breathed the spirit of admiration for his elevated genius, which the author—one whom Lamb held in the highest esteem for himself, and for his devotion to Coleridge—had for years expressed both in his words and in deeds. But it is not possible for the subtlest characteristic power, even when animated by the warmest personal regard, to give to those who never had the privilege of his companionship, an idea of what Lamb was. There was an apparent contradiction in him, which seemed an inconsistency between thoughts closely associated, and which was in reality nothing but the contradiction of his genius and his fortune,

fantastically exhibiting itself in different aspects, which close intimacy could alone appreciate. He would startle you with the finest perception of truth, separating, by a phrase, the real from a tissue of conventional falsehoods, and the next moment, by some whimsical invention, make you “doubt truth to be a liar.” He would touch the inmost pulse of profound affection, and then break off in some jest, which would seem profane “to ears polite,” but carry as profound a meaning to those who had the right key, as his most pathetic suggestions; and where he loved and doted most, he would vent the overflowing of his feeling in words that looked like rudeness. He touches on this strange resource of love in his “Farewell to Tobacco,” in a passage which may explain some startling freedoms with those he himself loved most dearly.

· ——— “ Irony all, and feign’d abuse,
Such as perplex lovers use,
At a need, when in despair,
To paint forth their fairest fair;
Or in part but to express
That exceeding comeliness
Which their fancies doth so strike
They borrow language of dislike;
And, instead of ‘dearest Miss,’
Jewel, honey, sweetheart, bliss,
And those forms of old admiring
Call her cockatrice and siren,

Basilisk, and all that's evil,
Witch, hyena, mermaid, devil,
Ethiop, wench, and blackamoor,
Monkey, ape, and twenty more,
Friendly traitress, loving foe.
Not that she is truly so,
But no other way they know
A contentment to express
Borders so upon excess,
That they do not rightly wot,
Whether it be pain or not."

Thus, in the very excess of affection to his sister, whom he loved above all else on earth, he would sometimes address to her some words of seeming reproach, yet so tinged with a humorous irony that none but an entire stranger could mistake his drift. His anxiety for her health, even in his most convivial moments, was unceasing. If, in company, he perceived she looked languid, he would repeatedly ask her, "Mary, does your head ache?" "Don't you feel unwell?" and would be satisfied by none of her gentle assurances, that his fears were groundless. He was always afraid of her sensibilities being too deeply engaged, and if in her presence any painful accident or history was discussed, he would turn the conversation with some desperate joke. Miss Beetham, the author of the "Lay of Marie," which Lamb esteemed one of the most graceful and truly feminine works in a literature rich in female genius, who has reminded

me of the trait in some recollections of Lamb, with which she has furnished me, relates, that once when she was speaking to Miss Lamb of Charles, and in her earnestness Miss Lamb had laid her hand kindly on the eulogist's shoulder, he came up hastily and interrupted them, saying, "Come, come, we must not talk sentimentally," and took up the conversation in his gayest strain.

Many of Lamb's witty and curious sayings have been repeated since his death, which are worthy to be held in undying remembrance; but they give no idea of the general tenor of his conversation, which was far more singular and delightful in the traits, which could never be recalled, than in the epigrammatic turns which it is possible to quote. It was fretted into perpetual eddies of verbal felicity and happy thought, with little tranquil intervals reflecting images of exceeding elegance and grace. He sometimes poured out puns in startling succession; sometimes curiously contrived a train of sentences to introduce the catastrophe of a pun, which, in that case, was often startling from its own demerit. At Mr. Cary's one day, he introduced and kept up an elaborate dissertation on the various uses and abuses of the word *nice*; and when its variations were exhausted, showed what he had been driving at by exclaiming, "Well!

now we have held a Council of Nice." "A pun," said he in a letter to Coleridge, in which he eulogized the Odes and Addresses of his friends Hood and Reynolds, "is a thing of too much consequence, to be thrown in as a make-weight. You shall read one of the Addresses twice over and miss the puns, and it shall be quite as good, or better, than when you discover them. A pun is a noble thing *per se*. O never bring it in as an accessory ! A pun is a sole digest of reflection (vide my 'Aids' to that awaking from a savage state) ; it is entire ; it fills the mind ; it is as perfect as a sonnet ; better. It limps ashamed in the train and retinue of humour. It knows it should have an establishment of its own. The one, for instance, I made the other day ; I forget which it was." Indeed, Lamb's choicest puns and humorous expressions could not be recollected. They were born of the evanescent feeling, and died with it ; "one moment *bright*, then gone for ever." The shocks of pleasurable surprise were so rapid in succession, and the thoughts suggested so new, that one destroyed the other, and left only the sense of delight behind. Frequently as I had the happiness of seeing him during twenty years, I can add nothing from my own store of recollection to those which have been collected by others, and those I almost hesitate to

repeat, so vapid is their effect when printed compared to that which they produced when, stammered out, they gave to the moment its victory.*

It cannot be denied or concealed that Lamb's

* Miss Beetham has kindly supplied the following examples of his conversation :—A Miss Pate (when he heard of her, he asked if she was any relation to Mr. John *Head* of Ipswich) was at a party, and he said on hearing her name, "Miss Pate I hate." "You are the first person who ever told me so, however," said she. "O! I mean nothing by it. If it had been Miss Dove, I should have said, Miss Dove I love; or Miss Pike I like." About this time also I saw Mr. Hazlitt for the first time at their house, and was talking on metaphysical subjects with him. Mr. Lamb came up; but my companion was very eloquent, and I begged him not to interrupt us. He stood silent, and Mr. Dyer came to me. "I know," said he, "that Mr. Cristall is a very fine artist, but I should like to know in what his merit principally consists. Is it colouring, character, design, &c.? my eyes are so bad!" On which Mr. Lamb began rhyming—

"Says Mr. Dyer to Mr. Dawe,
Pray how does Mr. Cristall draw?
Says Mr. Dawe to Mr. Dyer,
He draws as well as you'd desire."

A lady he was intimate with had dark eyes, and one evening people rather persecuted him to praise them. "You should now write a couplet in praise of her eyes." "Aye do, Mr. Lamb," said she, "make an epigram about my eyes." He looked at her—

"Your eyes! your eyes!
Are both of a size!"

which was praise, but the least that could be accorded. Mrs. S—— recommended *honey* to him as a good thing for the eyes, and said her daughter had received much benefit from it. "I knew," said he, "she had sweet eyes, but had no idea before how they became so."

At my house once a person said something about his grandmother.

excellencies, moral and intellectual, were blended with a single frailty; so intimately associating itself with all that was most charming in the one,

“Was she a tall woman?” said Mr. Lamb. “I don’t know; No. Why do you ask?” “O mine was; she was a granny dear.” He asked an absent lady’s name, who had rather sharp features. On hearing it was Elizabeth, or something of the kind, he said, “I should have thought, if it had been Mary, she might have been St. Mary Axe.” Another, who was very much marked with the small-pox, he said, looked as if the devil had ridden rough-shod over her face. I saw him talking to her afterwards with great apparent interest, and noticed it, saying, “I thought he had not liked her.” His reply was, “I like her internals very well.” When I knew him first, I happened to sit next him at dinner, and he was running on about some lady who had died of love for him, saying, “he was very sorry,” but we could not command such inclinations; making all the commonplace stuff said on such occasions appear very ridiculous, his sister laughingly interrupting him now and then, by saying, “Why, she’s alive now!” “Why, she’s married, and has a large family,” &c. He would not, however, allow it, and went on. With a very serious face, therefore, when he looked my way, I said, “And did she really die?” With a look of indignant astonishment at my simplicity, he said, “and do you think I should?” Not being able to suppress a smile, he saw what I had been about; and without finishing his speech, turned away his head. The way in which he would imitate a person who had been detected in some petty theft was inimitable. He began once saying, he never had been in suspicious circumstances but once, and then he had his hand over a guinea that lay on a counter, but that he really did not know it was there, &c. My youngest sister, then a little girl, in her talk afterwards, seemed to think he must have known it.

Mrs. H—— was sitting on a sofa one day between Mr. Montague and Mr. Lamb. The latter spoke to her, but all her attention was given to the other party. At last they ceased talking, and turning round to Mr. Lamb, she asked what it was he had been saying? He

and sweetest in the other, that, even if it were right to withdraw it wholly from notice, it would be impossible without it to do justice to his virtues.

replied, "ask Mr. Montague, for it went in at one ear and out at another."

One day, at the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, I was sitting on a form, looking at the catalogue, and answering some young people about me who had none, or spared themselves the trouble of consulting it. There was a large picture of Prospero and Miranda; and I had just said, "It is by *Shëe*;" when a voice near me said, "Would it not be more grammatical to say by *her*?" I looked, it was Mr. Lamb.

He went with a party down to my brother Charles's ship, in which the officers gave a ball to their friends. My brother hired a vessel to take us down to it, and some one of the company asked its name. On hearing it was the *Antelope*, Mr. Lamb cried out, "Don't name it; I have such a respect for my aunt, I cannot bear to think of her doing such a foolish action!"

I once sat with Mr. Lamb in the pit of the theatre, when Mrs. Siddons gave one of her last performances. We had two vulgar and conceited women behind us, who went on explaining and commenting, to show their knowledge, in a most absurd manner. Mr. Lamb occasionally gave them a lift. When Malcolm came on, in particular, he said, "*He* a king! why he is in petticoats!" One of them said to the other, "It's the dress of the country. Ignorant wretches!" I had, I believe, once led the discourse in company, by telling a story of a bad Arabian poet, who fell sick because he could get nobody to hear him recite: the physician grasped the cane, and caned him. On this, Mr. Lamb declaimed a great deal on the absurdity of reading one's own works aloud;—that people were always tired, instead of being pleased with it;—and that he made a poem the other day, befitting the time (one of those of overwhelming darkness, such as ours in London sometimes are); and though he had not yet had time to transcribe it, and recollected it perfectly, he should never think of repeating it to other people. Every body of course were entreating him to favour them

The eagerness with which he would quaff exciting liquors, from an early period of life, proved that to a physical peculiarity of constitution was to be

by repeating it, assuring him they should like it very much; and *at length* he complied.—“O my Gog! what a fog!” “A fine thing to make a fuss about!” said Miss M——; “Why, I can make a second part, extempore—I cannot see to kill a flea?”

A lady, who had been visiting in the neighbourhood of Ipswich, on her return could talk of nothing but the beauty of the country, and the merits of the people. Mr. Lamb remarked, that “she was Suffolk-ated.”

The following specimens of his conversation has been supplied by another friend.

A widow-friend of Lamb having opened a preparatory school for children at Camden Town, said to him, “I live so far from town I must have a sign, I think you call it, to show that I teach children.” “Well,” he replied, you can have nothing better than ‘*The Murder of the Innocents.*’”

A gentleman, who had lived some years in China, mentioned that a formidable enemy to the Chinese would arise one day in a warlike piratical nation on the borders of China—the *Ladrones*. In the course of the evening the progress of musical science in China was spoken of, and the traveller, by way of illustrating his remarks, sung a Chinese love-song. Lamb listened very gravely to this dissonant performance, and at the end exclaimed “*God prosper the Ladrones!*”

Coleridge one day said to him; “Charles, did you ever hear me *preach?*” “I never heard you do any thing else,” said Lamb.

Seeing a little boy, heavily laden with groceries, toiling up Highgate Hill one hot summer’s day, Lamb offered to assist him: took his load; and carried it for him to the house where the child was to deliver it. On laying down his burden, Lamb requested the lady of the house to remonstrate with her grocer on the inhumanity of compelling a little boy to carry such a load. The lady bristled up, and sharply replied, “I have nothing to do with such matters;” on which Lamb, altering his tone, irresistibly said, “I hope, ma’am, you’ll give me a drop of beer.”

ascribed, in the first instance, the strength of the temptation with which he was assailed. This kind of corporeal need; the struggles of deep thought to overcome the bashfulness and the impediment of speech which obstructed its utterance; the dull, heavy, irksome labours which hung heavy on his mornings, and dried up his spirits; and still more, the sorrows which had environed him, and which prompted him to snatch a fearful joy; and the unbounded craving after sympathy with human feelings, conspired to disarm his power of resisting when the means of indulgence were actually before him. Great exaggerations have been prevalent on this subject, countenanced, no doubt, by the "Confessions" which, in the prodigality of his kindness, he contributed to his friend's collection of essays and authorities against the use of spirituous liquors; for, although he had rarely the power to overcome the temptation when presented, he made heroic sacrifices in flight. His final abandonment of tobacco, after many ineffectual attempts, was one of these—a princely sacrifice. He had loved smoking, "not wisely, but too well," for he had been content to use the coarsest varieties of the "great plant." When Dr. Parr,—who took only the finest tobacco, used to half fill his pipe

with salt, and smoked with a philosophic calmness,—saw Lamb smoking the strongest preparation of the weed, puffing out smoke like some furious Enchanter, he gently laid down his pipe, and asked him, how he had acquired his power of smoking at such a rate? Lamb replied, “I toiled after it, sir, as some men toil after virtue.” Partly to shun the temptations of society, and partly to preserve his sister’s health, he fled from London, where his pleasures and his heart were, and buried himself in the solitude of the country, to him always dismal. He would even deny himself the gratification of meeting Wordsworth or Southey, or use it very sparingly during their visits to London, in order that the accompaniments of the table might not entice him to excess. And if sometimes, after miles of solitary communing with his own sad thoughts, the village inn did invite him to quaff a glass of sparkling ale; and if when his retreat was lighted up with the presence of some old friend, he was unable to refrain from the small potion which was too much for his feeble frame, let not the stout-limbed and the happy exult over the consequence! Drinking with him, except so far as it cooled a feverish thirst, was not a sensual, but an intellectual pleasure; it lighted

up his fading fancy, enriched his humour, and impelled the struggling thought or beautiful image into day; and perhaps by requiring for him some portion of that allowance which he extended to all human frailties, endeared him the more to those who so often received, and were delighted to bestow it.

Lamb's indulgence to the failings of others could hardly, indeed, be termed allowance; the name of charity is too cold to suit it. He did not merely love his friends in spite of their errors, but he loved them errors and all; so near to him was every thing human. He numbered among his associates, men of all varieties of opinion—philosophical, religious, and political—and found something to like, not only in the men themselves, but in themselves as associated with their theories and their schemes. In the high and calm, but devious speculations of Godwin; in the fierce hatreds of Hazlitt; in the gentle and glorious mysticism of Coleridge; in the sturdy opposition of Thelwall to the government; in Leigh Hunt's softened and fancy-streaked patriotism; in the gallant toryism of Stoddart; he found traits which made the individuals more dear to him. When Leigh Hunt was imprisoned in Cold Bath Fields for a libel, Lamb was one of his most constant visitors—

and when Thelwall was striving to bring the "Champion" into notice, Lamb was ready to assist him with his pen, and to fancy himself, for the time, a jacobin.* In this large intellectual tolerance, he resembled Professor

* The following little poem—quite out of Lamb's usual style—was written for that journal.

THE THREE GRAVES.

Close by the ever-burning brimstone beds,
Where Bedloe, Oates and Judas, hide their heads,
I saw great Satan, like a sexton stand,
With his intolerable spade in hand,
Digging three graves. Of coffin shape they were,
For those who, coffinless, must enter there,
With unblest rites. The shrouds were of that cloth
Which Clotho weaved in her blackest wrath ;
The dismal tint oppress'd the eye, that dwelt
Upon it long, like darkness to be felt.
The pillows to these baleful beds were toads,
Large, living, livid, melancholy loads,
Whose softness shock'd. Worms of all monstrous size
Crawl'd round ; and one upcoil'd, which never dies,
A doleful bell, inculcating despair,
Was always ringing in the heavy air.
And all around the detestable pit
Strange headless ghosts, and quarter'd forms did flit ;
Rivers of blood from living traitors spilt,
By treachery stung from poverty to guilt.
I ask'd the fiend, for whom those rites were meant ?
" These graves," quoth he, " when life's brief oil is spent,
When the dark night comes, and they're sinking bedwards,
I mean for Castles, Oliver, and Edwards."

Wilson, who, notwithstanding his own decided opinions, has a compass of mind large enough to embrace all others which have noble alliances within its range.* But not only to opposite opinions, and devious habits of thought, was Lamb indulgent; he discovered “the soul of goodness in things evil” so vividly, that the surrounding evil disappeared from his mental vision. Nothing—no discovery of error or of crime—could divorce his sympathy from a man who had once engaged it. He saw in the spendthrift, the outcast, only the innocent companion of his school-days or the joyous associate of his convivial hours, and he did not even make penitence or reform a condition of his regard. Perhaps he had less sympathy with philanthropic schemers for the improvement of the world than with any other class of men; but of these he numbered two of the greatest, Clarkson the destroyer of the slave trade, and Basil Montague the

* Lamb only once met that remarkable person,—who has probably more points of resemblance to him than any other living poet,—and was quite charmed with him. They walked out from Enfield together, and strolled happily a long summer’s day, not omitting, however, a call for a refreshing draught. Lamb called for a pot of ale or porter—half of which would have been his own usual allowance; and was delighted to hear the Professor, on the appearance of the foaming tankard, say reproachfully to the waiter, “And one for me!”

constant opponent of the judicial infliction of death ; and the labours of neither have been in vain !

To those who were not intimately acquainted with Lamb, the strong disinclination to contemplate another state of being, which he sometimes expressed in his serious conversation, and which he has solemnly confessed in his “ New Year’s Eve,” might cast a doubt on feelings which were essentially pious. The same peculiarity of nature which attached him to the narrow and crowded streets, in preference to the mountain and the glen—which made him loth to quit even painful circumstances and unpleasant or ill-timed company ; the desire to seize and grasp all that was nearest, bound him to earth, and prompted his sympathies to revolve within a narrow circle. Yet in that very power of adhesion to outward things, might be discerned the strength of a spirit destined to live beyond them. Within the contracted sphere of his habits and desires, he detected the subtlest essences of Christian kindness, shed over it a light from heaven, and peopled it with divine fancies and

“ Thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.”

Although he numbered among his associates

freethinkers and sceptics, he had a great dislike to any profane handling of sacred subjects, and always discouraged polemical discussion. One evening, when Irving and Coleridge were in company, and a young gentleman had spoken slightly of religion, Lamb remained silent; but, when the party broke up, he said to the youth who had thus annoyed his guests, "Pray, did you come here in a hat, sir, or in a turban?"

The range of Lamb's reading was varied, but yet peculiar. He rejoiced in all old English authors, but cared little for the moderns, except one or two; and those whom he loved as authors because they were his friends. Attached always to things of flesh and blood rather than to "the bare earth and mountains bare, and grass in the green field," he chiefly loved the great dramatists, whose beauties he supported, and sometimes heightened, in his suggestive criticisms. While he enjoyed Wordsworth's poetry, especially "The Excursion," with a love which grew upon him from his youth, he would repeat some of Pope's divine compliments, or Dryden's lines, weighty with sterling sense or tremendous force of satire, with eyes trembling into tears. The comedies of Wycherley, and Congreve, and Farquhar, were not to him gross and

sensual, but airy, delicate creations, framed out of coarse materials it might be, but evaporating in wit and grace, harmless effusions of the intellect and the fancy. The ponderous dulness of old controversialists, the dead weight of volumes of once fierce dispute, of which time had exhausted the venom, did not appal him. He liked the massive reading of the old Quaker records, the huge density of old schoolmen, better than the flippancy of modern criticism. If you spoke of Lord Byron, he would turn the subject by quoting the lines descriptive of his namesake in *Love's Labour Lost*—"Oft have I heard of you, my Lord Byron," &c.—for he could find nothing to revere or love in the poetry of that extraordinary but most uncomfortable poet; except the apostrophe to Parnassus, in which he exults in the sight of the real mountain instead of the mere poetic image. All the Laras, and Giaours, and Childe Harolds, were to him but "unreal mockeries,"—the phantasms of a feverish dream,—forms which did not appeal to the sympathies of mankind, and never can find root among them. Shelley's poetry, too, was icy cold to him; except one or two of the minor poems, in which he could not help admiring the exquisite beauty of the expression; and the "Cenci,"

in which, notwithstanding the painful nature of the subject, there is a warmth and passion, and a correspondent simplicity of diction, which prove how mighty a poet the author would have become had he lived long enough for his feelings to have free discourse with his creative power. Responding only to the touch of human affection, he could not bear poetry which, instead of making the whole world kin, renders our own passions and frailties and virtues strange to us; presents them at distance in splendid masquerade; exalts them into new and unauthorized mythology, and crystallises all our freshest loves and mantling joys into clusters of radiant fancies. He made some amends for his indifference to Shelley, by his admiration of Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein," which he thought the most extraordinary realisation of the idea of a being out of nature which had ever been effected. For the Scotch novels he cared very little, not caring to be puzzled with new plots, and preferring to read Fielding, and Smollett, and Richardson, whose stories were familiar, over and over again, to being worried with the task of threading the maze of fresh adventure. But the goodnaturedness of Sir Walter to all his contemporaries won his admiration, and he heartily rejoiced in the

greatness of his fame and the rich rewards showered upon him, and desired they might accumulate for the glory of literature and the triumph of kindness. He was never introduced to Sir Walter; but he used to speak with gratitude and pleasure of the circumstances under which he saw him once in Fleet-street. A man, in the dress of a mechanic, stopped him just at Inner Temple-gate, and said, touching his hat, "I beg your pardon, Sir, but perhaps you would like to see Sir Walter Scott; that is he just crossing the road;" and Lamb stammered out his hearty thanks to his truly humane informer.

Of his own writings it is now superfluous to speak; for, after having encountered long derision and neglect, they have taken their place among the classics of his language. They stand alone, at once singular and delightful. They are all carefully elaborated; yet never were works written in higher defiance to the conventional pomp of style. A sly hit, a happy pun, a humorous combination, lets the light into the intricacies of the subject, and supplies the place of ponderous sentences. As his serious conversation was his best, so his serious writing is far preferable to his fantastical humours,—cheering as they are, and suggestive ever as they are of high

and invigorating thoughts. Seeking his materials, for the most part, in the common paths of life,—often in the humblest,—he gives an importance to every thing, and sheds a grace over all. The spirit of gentility seems to breathe around all his persons; he detects the venerable and the excellent in the narrowest circumstances and humblest conditions, with the same subtilty which reveals the hidden soul of the greatest works of genius. In all things he is most human. Of all modern writers, his works are most immediately directed to give us heart-ease and to make us happy.

Among the felicities of Lamb's chequered life, that which he esteemed most, was his intimate friendship with some of the greatest of our poets—Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth; the last and greatest of whom has paid a tribute to his memory, which may fitly close these volumes.

“ To a good Man of most dear memory
This stone is sacred. Here he lies apart
From the great city where he first drew breath,
Was reared and taught; and humbly earned his bread,
To the strict labours of the merchant's desk
By duty chained. Not seldom did those tasks
Teaze, and the thought of time so spent depress
His spirit, but the recompence was high;
Firm Independence, Bounty's rightful Sire;

Affections, warm as sunshine, free as air ;
 And when the precious hours of leisure came,
 Knowledge and wisdom, gained from converse sweet
 With books, or while he ranged the crowded streets
 With a keen eye, and overflowing heart :
 So genius triumphed over seeming wrong,
 And poured out truth in works by thoughtful love
 Inspired—works potent over smiles and tears.
 And as round mountain-tops the lightning plays,
 Thus innocently sported, breaking forth
 As from a cloud of some grave sympathy,
 Humour and wild instinctive wit, and all
 The vivid flashes of his spoken words.
 From the most gentle creature nursed in fields
 Had been derived the name he bore—a name,
 Wherever Christian altars have been raised,
 Hallowed to meekness and to innocence ;
 And if in him meekness at times gave way,
 Provoked out of herself by troubles strange,
 Many and strange, that hung about his life ;
 Still, at the centre of his being, lodged
 A soul by resignation sanctified :
 And if too often, self-reproached, he felt
 That innocence belongs not to our kind,
 A power that never ceased to abide in him,
 Charity, 'mid the multitude of sins
 That she can cover, left not his exposed
 To an unforgiving judgment from just Heaven.
 O, he was good, if e'er a good man lived !

* * * *

From a reflecting mind and sorrowing heart
 Those simple lines flowed with an earnest wish,
 Though but a doubting hope, that they might serve
 Fitly to guard the precious dust of him
 Whose virtues called them forth. That aim is missed
 For much that truth most urgently required
 Had from a faltering pen been asked in vain :
 Yet, haply, on the printed page received,
 The imperfect record, there, may stand unblamed

As long as verse of mine shall breathe the air
Of memory, or see the light of love.

Thou wert a scorner of the fields, my Friend !
But more in show than truth ! and from the fields,
And from the mountains, to thy rural grave
Transported, my soothed spirit hovers o'er
Its green untrodden turf, and blowing flowers ;
And taking up a voice shall speak (tho' still
Awed by the theme's peculiar sanctity,
Which words less free presumed not even to touch)
Of that fraternal love, whose heaven-lit lamp
From infancy, through manhood, to the last
Of threescore years, and to thy latest hour,
Burnt on with ever-strengthening light, enshrined
Within thy bosom.

' Wonderful ' hath been
The love established between man and man,
' Passing the love of women ; ' and between
Man and his help-mate in fast wedlock joined
Through God, is raised a spirit and soul of love
Without whose blissful influence Paradise
Had been no Paradise ; and earth were now
A waste, where creatures bearing human form,
Direst of savage beasts, would roam in fear,
Joyless and comfortless. Our days glide on ;
And let him grieve who cannot choose but grieve
That he hath been an Elm without his Vine,
And her bright dower of clustering charities,
That, round his trunk and branches, might have clung
Enriching and adorning. Unto thee
Not so enriched, not so adorned, to thee
Was given (say rather thou of later birth
Wert given to her) a Sister—'tis a word
Timidly uttered, for she *lives*, the meek,
The self-restraining, and the ever-kind ;
In whom thy reason and intelligent heart
Found—for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
All softening, humanising, hallowing powers,
Whether withheld, or for her sake unsought—

More than sufficient recompence !

Her love

(What weakness prompts the voice to tell it here ?)
 Was as the love of mothers ; and when years,
 Lifting the boy to man's estate, had called
 The long-protected to assume the part
 Of a protector, the first filial tie
 Was undissolved ; and, in or out of sight,
 Remained imperishably interwoven
 With life itself. Thus, 'mid a shifting world,
 Did they together testify of time
 And seasons' difference—a double tree
 With two collateral stems sprung from one root ;
 Such were they—such thro' life they *might* have been
 In union, in partition only such ;
 Otherwise wrought the will of the Most High ;
 Yet, thro' all visitations and all trials,
 Still they were faithful ; like two vessels launched
 From the same beach one ocean to explore
 With mutual help, and sailing—to their league
 True, as inexorable winds, or bars
 Floating or fixed of polar ice, allow.

But turn we rather, let my spirit turn
 With thine. O silent and invisible Friend !
 To those dear intervals, nor rare nor brief,
 When reunited, and by choice withdrawn
 From miscellaneous converse, ye were taught
 That the remembrance of foregone distress,
 And the worse fear of future ill (which oft
 Doth hang around it, as a sickly child
 Upon its mother) may be both alike
 Disarmed of power to unsettle present good
 So prized, and things inward and outward held
 In such an even balance, that the heart
 Acknowledges God's grace, his mercy feels,
 And in its depth of gratitude is still.

O gift divine of quiet sequestration !
The hermit, exercised in prayer and praise,
And feeding daily on the hope of heaven,
Is happy in his vow, and fondly cleaves
To life-long singleness ; but happier far
Was, to your souls, and, to the thoughts of others,
A thousand times more beautiful appeared,
Your *dual* loneliness. The sacred tie
Is broken ; yet why grieve ? for Time but holds
His moiety in trust, till Joy shall lead
To the blest world where parting is unknown."

THE END.

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